

# **LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES**

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## **Why Bad Things Happen To Good People**

Psa. 73:1-14

An atheist once said to a believer: "If there is a God, how do you account for all the suffering in the world?" The believer replied: "If there is no God, how do you account for it?"

Death, pain, suffering of the innocent, sorrow, poverty, disappointments.  
These cover the earth. Why?

1. Why does a young child have to be afflicted with leukemia?
2. Why are some children born with birth defects, while others are born perfectly healthy?
3. Why is a young man in the prime of life killed in an automobile accident?
4. Why is a young family man with great responsibility both at home and in the church, suddenly stricken with a terrible illness that forces him to quit work, leaving him an invalid?
5. Why is a young mother suddenly diagnosed with incurable cancer?
6. Why are parents suddenly killed in an air crash, leaving several orphan children?
7. Why in some third-world countries are thousands starving to death? Little children with severe malnutrition, seen with bones protruding through the flesh?

Why? Why?

### **I. Sin, Suffering, and Satan.**

In a very basic sense sin is the cause of all suffering. God made all things good according to Gen. 1:31. Satan brought sin and suffering into the world Gen. 3:13-19.

There is an idea in the world, however, that suffering may, in some way, be related to a specific sin that one commits. This is not a new idea, as we see from John 9:1-3 "Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him." It appears that the disciples reasoned: Physical disability is the result of somebody's special sin. In the case of the blind man it was either his or his parents. It seemed hardly possible to attribute it to the blind man, since the affliction existed from birth. Was it then the sin of the parents? This view, expressed by the disciples, is a persistent one, and is held by many today even though the book of Job is a clear refutation of it. Job was a good man who, was not in anyway responsible for the calamities that befell him. The idea that sickness and physical disabilities are the result of specific sins, and are penalties administered for this reason, is false. Jesus points out that neither the man nor his parent's sin caused this man to be born blind.

The Lord teaches them that instead of wrestling with the age-old problem of the relationship of sin and suffering they should see in this case the marvelous blessing which the love and grace of God would produce.

## II. What Is God's Will?

Perhaps one of the most mis-used and mis-understood phrases is: "It is God's will." Some have used it in an attempt to explain all joys and sorrows on earth. For example a young man has to have a leg amputated. Someone may say "Well, it is just the will of God."

Or a young child runs out in front of a car and is killed. "This is the will of God," they say. The term needs to be clarified:

A. God's intentional will. God made man and for his good and happiness set in order all laws, both physical and spiritual, desiring that his offspring should obey them and be blessed thereby.

B. God's permissive will. God controls all things in heaven and earth. Nothing is done without His permission. Man, however, has the power of choice, a freedom of will. Without this man would be nothing more than a machine or robot. Because he has this choice, man can choose to violate divine laws, and when he does God permits the consequences.

Was it God's will for Job to suffer? Yes and No. It was not his intentional will. For He did not plan it; but under the circumstances he permitted it.

In order to better understand adversity, and the reason bad things happen to good people, we classify our discussion under three headings:

1. Trouble that man brings upon himself
2. Trouble that is brought on us by others, and
3. tribulation which is the chastening of the Father

## III. Trouble Man Brings Upon Himself.

Anytime divine laws are violated, whether physical or spiritual, consequences will come. The violation may be:

1. through deliberate will or
2. through carelessness, or
3. through ignorance.

Whatever the reason, any violation of these laws can bring pain and suffering to the individual involved.

### A. Physical laws were ordained for our good.

The law of gravitation keeps all things in place on the earth. Suppose a man goes to the top of a tall building and jumps. He will die. Was it the will of God? No, not his intentional will. God did not desire or plan it.

But God did will that (1) man should have freedom of choice and (2) that the law of gravitation would continue to operate. Thus, it was God's permissive will. Suppose he should temporarily suspend the law of gravity, just to save one life. Can you imagine how many other lives would be destroyed as a result?

B. Through carelessness, divine physical laws may be violated.

Suppose man gets into a car and speeds down the street. He hits another car and several are killed. Is it God's will? No, not his intentional will. He does not intend that a man carelessly kill. It is his permissive will because he has instituted the law of force for man's good. This decrees that when a stronger object is pitted against a weaker object, the weakest object must give way to the force. What if God suspended the law? We couldn't even drive a nail into a board.

C. Divine laws of health regulate man's well-being.

If these laws are violated, either deliberately, carelessly or ignorantly, the consequences will follow. Because of natural law, God allowed Epaphroditus to become ill Phil. 2:25-28. We understand that we cannot continue to abuse our bodies and neglect our health without increasing the risk of something going wrong. The man who smokes two packs of cigarettes a day for twenty years and develops lung cancer, faces problems which deserve our sympathy, but he has no grounds for asking, "How could God do this to me?" or "Why did God let this happen?" The person who weighs considerably more than he should, and whose heart has to pump blood through miles of additional fat cells and clogged arteries will have to pay the price for that additional strain on his system and will have no grounds to complain to God. God permits us to destroy ourselves, if we choose to do so. But why cancer? Why blindness and diabetes and kidney failure? Why do things spontaneously go wrong in our bodies without our having caused them through bad health habits? This is hard to answer because we do not know all the ramifications of inherited physical weaknesses and tendencies. The genetic make up of each of us is directly influenced by our parents and grandparents. The outcome in us may be a disease seen before or never seen before. We don't always know why one person gets sick and another one does not, we can only assume that there are natural laws at work that we may neither know or understand. But one thing is sure. God did not cause it, nor did he intentionally will it. He does not send a specific illness to a specific person. God does not have a weekly quota of malignant tumors to distribute. He does permit it because of natural law.

D. Spiritual laws are just as fixed and binding.

As in the physical realm, man reaps what he sows.

Eliphaz stated: "Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" Job.4:8. The New Testament teaches "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." Gal.6:7-8 The argument of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar was that sin brings suffering. God rebuked them and required them to repent of their teachings. Why? They misapplied the principle. They reasoned: "Job, your adversity is proof that you have sown sin."

They were using it to teach that one who sows spiritual iniquity will reap physical calamity. **THIS IS FALSE REASONING.** It was this same concept that led the disciples to question who sinned in John 9. The man born blind or his parents. The scriptures teach that the man who sows sin will reap corruption, spiritual corruption.

Part in this life, but mostly in the life to come. But even in this life man brings much sorrow upon himself by a violation of spiritual laws: Through the mis-use of the tongue he may be embroiled in constant turmoil and strife. He one has a heart full of envy, hatred, and unforgiveness, he will spend many days of anguish all brought on by himself. Men who commit murder or immorality usually end up paying dearly for their sins.

#### V. Trouble Brought On By Others

Much adversity, both of body and spirit, comes not from one's own conduct but from the actions of others. Children may perish with starvation because of indolent parents or physical injury at the hands of brutal parents. The innocent often suffer because of the guilty. A criminal takes a mans life, leaving his wife and children to suffer years of loneliness and depravation. God can't stop us from doing wrong, without taking away our freedom, that makes us human. As human beings we can cheat, hurt, rob etc. This explains the Holocaust, i.e. the death of millions of innocent people at the hands of Hitler. When people ask "where was God in Auschwitz?" They ignore the fact that God did not cause it. It was caused by human beings choosing to be cruel to their fellow man. Envy took the life of Abel, if he had not been righteous, Cain probably would not have wanted to kill him. If Joseph had not been better than his brethren they would have felt no need to do away with him. If Job had not been godly, Satan would have felt no urge to challenge him to a duel and attempt to destroy him. Bad things happen to good people, because of other's sins.

#### VI. The Chastening of the Lord.

Heb. 12:5-6 "...My son do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him, For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." The writer quotes this proverb (Proverbs 3:11-12) as proof that the burdens which the suffering saints were then being called upon to bear were actually proofs of God's love, and not evidences of his indifference. We learn: (a) God chastens his children; (b) this chastening has, as its object, our welfare, and it ought not to be lightly regarded; (c) it is one of the many evidences of God's love for us.

#### A. How does God chasten us?

Does he send sorrow, suffering and bitter trial upon those whom he loves? Is he the author of the evil which often befalls us on our way? Surely not. Evil is not of God, it is of the devil. Just as our parents disciplined and corrected us, so God is said to chasten or discipline his children. When we fail and are disobedient, God allows the natural and necessary consequences of violations of his laws, whether in the natural or spiritual realms, to come upon us. God is often said to do things, which in effect he actually only allows or permits.

An example is Pharaoh in Ex.4:21. "...but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go." The King's heart was hardened when God made demands on him which Pharaoh, because of his rebellious heart, was unwilling to accede to, the fault being his. In such situations God wants us to see in these experiences the hand of divine wisdom, and the importance of avoiding those actions which must lead to such. If we are wise enough to see in the trials of life the importance of faithful obedience, then these trials are used of God as chastening instruments to bring us up to the divine standard. It is in this way that we suffer chastisement in this life.

The chastening of the Lord has a three fold design:

1. that of correcting our faults
2. strengthening our faith, and
3. promoting our eternal welfare.

Our response is four-fold:

1. The child of God must not despise it v.5
2. He must not faint under the impact of it
3. He must submit to it v9, saying at all times and under all circumstances, "O Lord, thy will, not mine, be done.
4. He must be exercised thereby v. 11 meaning that we must cooperate with the divine purpose and strive for the deepening and strengthening of our faith under chastening circumstances.

May we ever realize that when bad things happen to us, God is not to be blamed, nor rejected.