

"If God is Good, Why Do Bad Things Happen?"

Romans 8:28

Introduction

I suspect that this question is one of the top 5 questions that people ask.

It grapples with the tension of how God can be good while bad things happen to us. Some might come to one of two conclusions:

- Bad things happen to us because God is not powerful enough to stop them,
- Or, bad things happen to us because God is not really good.

So, we wonder how God can be good and infinitely powerful ... and, yet allow bad things into our life.

I hope that you are a Bible-believing Christian and resolutely hold to God's goodness and power. But, that's why some believers struggle in their prayer life and Bible intake when something really bad happens. They know that God could have stopped it ... but He didn't.

This topic is VERY relevant so we REALLY NEED to dig into God's Word to see what it says about it.

But, one more introductory matter before we explore God's Word. We need to understand that what we often consider bad things are often good things in disguise. We just lack perspective.

Six years ago, around Thanksgiving, our family was in a vehicle with the radio on. The radio host said that he wanted people to call in to say what they were thankful for that they never thought they would be thankful for. Kim immediately said out loud: "I'm thankful for breast cancer." Now, I can tell you that 4 months earlier when Kim was told that she had early-stage breast cancer and went through some serious surgeries as a result, we thought it was horrible. There were many, many tears. There were many prayers that went up in which we were asking God, "Why?!" Yet, when our deductible for the year was met, she said that she might as well go ahead and get a colonoscopy. Initially, the doctor felt that it wasn't necessary but she went ahead with it. They discovered a golf ball-sized mass in her colon. Within a month, it was taken out and determined to be precancerous but the doctor had said it was the largest precancerous mass she had ever seen that didn't have cancer. Almost certainly, it would have become cancerous. And it was found because Kim had breast cancer.

So, if you are a Jesus-follower, things that might seem bad (or downright evil) can be used to bring about good in your life.

Romans 8:28 (CSB): “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

Now, let’s look at 6 constructive reasons why our good God lets “bad” things happen to us.

1. To Discipline Us

- a. **Hebrews 12:6–8 (CSB): “6 for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives. 7 Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline—which all receive—then you are illegitimate children and not sons.”**
- b. This passage tells us that God disciplines us just like a loving father disciplines his child.
 - i. Simply put, if I truly love my boys, then I will inflict some form of discomfort upon them when they do something wrong. My purpose is to get them to associate discomfort with bad, sinful choices. I love them so much that I want them to grow up to make good choices ... so I punish them when they make bad choices.
 - ii. If a parent tells a young child not to play in the street but that child willfully goes out into the street to play, there may be serious consequences inflicted upon that child. Why? Because the parent loves their child and wants discomfort to motivate that child to stay away from something so dangerous.
- c. This is the reason God often allows bad things into our life. It’s because we are in sin - and He wants to make it clear that He will do whatever He has to do in order to get us back on the road to becoming more like Jesus.
 - i. If you are a Jesus-follower and are in willful, ongoing sin, God WILL discipline you. (maybe your car will break-down, or you will be plagued with guilt, or a loved one will develop an illness, ...)
 - ii. Someone may say, “Well, I’m not perfect. In fact, I readily acknowledge that I have a few sins that I am tolerating in my life right now and God isn’t disciplining me.”
 - iii. **Hebrews 12:8 (CSB): “But if you are without discipline—which all receive—then you are illegitimate children and not sons.”**

- iv. Simply put, if you can remain in sin and you aren't experiencing some form of discipline from God, you are on your way to Hell and you need to be saved!

2. To Teach Us

- a. Galatians 6:7 (CSB): "Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap,"
- b. Sometimes, it's not sin. It's just bad choices. God lets us experience the consequences of those choices. He doesn't protect us so that we will learn.
- c. It's like parents who take their obstinate child to the zoo. They get near the llamas and the parent says, "Now, you need to stay back from the llamas." But, the child disobeys. The parent says it again, and the child refuses to listen. So, the parent just sits back and waits for it ... the llama spits at the kid. The kid cries ... and never gets close too close to llamas again.
- d. Oftentimes, God simply allows trouble into our life so that can learn some lessons. We are so obstinate that we won't comply with some of the commands found in Scripture ... so God lets us reap the consequences of bad choices. And we aren't too hard-headed, we generally learn our lesson.

3. To Grow Us

- a. Romans 5:3–5 (CSB): "3 And not only that, but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, 4 endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. 5 This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."
- b. Whether we like to admit it or not, we just don't tend to grow to be more like Jesus when life is easy.
 - i. When life is easy, we may not come to our Bible reading, hungry to hear from the Lord. We may even let our Bibles collect dust. Our prayer times may devolve into just a few prayers over the food during the day.
 - ii. It's in times of difficulty that we tend to come back to Jesus. We desperately need to hear from Him in our Bibles and we find reasons to spend time with Him in prayer.
- c. Last weekend, we were at Lackland Air Force Base for my second son's graduation from basic training. Watching them march onto the field, hearing that many of them were doing 50-70 push-ups at a time, watching them demonstrate pride and discipline, made you want to join them. Yet, to get to the incredibly high degree of discipline that they were at, you had

to go through a very difficult 8½ weeks of basic training. You had to go through the really bad stuff to demonstrate the good stuff.

- d. This is often how God develops discipline, and character, and Christlikeness in us. If you were to find someone whose walk with Jesus was so impressive that you wanted to be like them, and you said, “Hey, how can I become a serious Jesus-follower like you?”, you may hear them say, “Are you willing to go through all of the dark, dark valleys and times of testing like I have?” Difficulties are used to grow us!
- e. Difficulties are the way that God typically grows us.
 - i. **Afflictions produce endurance** - we develop the strength of character to just keep on keeping on. We don’t give up like we used to. Others may give up when small difficulties come their way but we don’t because we have been through so much more.
 - ii. **Endurance produces character** - they aren’t flighty about life. They have been through “stuff” and so it has sobered them. It has caused them to realize their frailty. It has caused them to develop a stronger relationship with the Lord.
 - iii. **Character produces hope** - When more troubles come their way, they find it easier to trust in the Lord because He has helped them so much before.

4. To Weaken Us

- a. 2 Corinthians 12:8–10 (CSB): “8 Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it would leave me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.” Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may reside in me. 10 So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”
- b. A parent’s job is to take dependent children and get them to become independent. When they take wings and fly, as painful as it is, it needs to happen. That’s what we trained them for.
- c. But God’s task is just the opposite. He takes independent Jesus-followers and makes them dependent upon Him. The life God desires for us to live is impossible to do in our own strength and God knows it. So, he sends troubles into our lives to remind us of our frailty so that we will depend upon Him.
- d. Imagine that you have a young child that is a few years old. You’ve just gone out to get groceries and it’s now time to get those bags in the house. Your three year old sets his eyes on a bag and tries in vain to lift it. You

ask if he needs help but he says “no” and continues to try to lift it. You may let him struggle for a while because he will get to the point where he asks for help.

- e. But God knows that we need strength to defeat sin. We need strength to trust him in the trial. We need strength to be victorious in difficult times. As soon as we acknowledge that we aren’t strong enough, he says, “I’m so glad that you realize that. Here, I’ll demonstrate my strength through you.”

f. **Philippians 4:13 (CSB): “I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.”**

5. To Equip Us

a. **2 Corinthians 1:3–4 (CSB): “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”**

- b. We live in a **Genesis 3** world and bad things are going to happen.
- c. And, my friend, you aren’t the only one who is going to experience bad things. As much as you might feel that you are all alone, you are surrounded by people who are going through their own troubles. There are people within 5-10 feet of you right now who are broken-hearted over troubles they are facing.
- d. We are a family of friends. Jesus left us the church so that we can be comforted ... and so that we can comfort others. That is what we see in **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**. When we go through a time of serious difficulty, we can comfort others.
- e. When you are going through something really bad, and someone comes up to you and whimsically says, “I know what you are going through,” you might be tempted to say, “No you don’t!”
- f. But, if someone says, “You don’t know this but I have gone through what you are going through right now. I understand how you are hurting right now,” you feel like someone finally understands and appreciates the intense pain you are in.
- g. It is even better if they don’t talk much, they just listen and affirm. But, they also share, specifically, how the Lord helped them through the ordeal. It can provide hope, a light at the end of the tunnel.

6. To Showcase Us

a. **Job 1:8 (CSB): “Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil.’”**

- b. In **Job 1-2**, God wanted to demonstrate the character of his followers. Satan believed that God's followers would abandon him when and if life got difficult. God knew that Job would remain faithful. But, it took a serious time of trial for Job's character to be demonstrated.
- c. It could be that the trials you are going through might simply be to demonstrate that you are a sold-out follower of Jesus and you aren't following Him simply because He's blessing you.

Conclusion

Friend, life is going to have difficulties. There are times when it is going to be hard.

But, as we look at Scripture, we realize that there are many things that God may be doing in your time of trial, all of which are to draw you closer to Him.

Maybe this morning, you've been holding onto anger at God for allowing tragedy in your life. Why not ask His forgiveness and for grace for healing.

Maybe you are in willful sin and your trials are God's discipline. You need to immediately confess and repent of the sin and follow Jesus.

Maybe things are going well for you so you pray for those around you.

Let's end the service differently this morning. If you are overwhelmed by trials or are broken over a loved-one or friend who is going through difficulties, why not come to the front and pray. I will close us out with prayer.