

WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE: GOD'S VIEW

Excerpts from the Book of Job

Introduction: (To show the need...)

One day while traveling north from Harwinton on Route 4 into Torrington, as I approached the intersection of Route 183, I noticed a street sweeper parked on the edge with police cars and flashing lights. I slowed down and saw an officer bending over an unconscious man who lay on the pavement next to his overturned cycle. Apparently the cyclist had collided with the street sweeper, and I was later to learn that the street sweeper was in the wrong. I learned later that the 33 year old man on the cycle eventually died. He was en route to repair his mother's roof when he collided with the sweeper. News reports said that he was always kind, seeking to do good to his fellow man, and that he is sorely missed by a young daughter named Dawn. In fact, someone has put the man's photo on the telephone pole near the intersection and kept it decorated with plastic flowers. **Question: Why did that man have to die like that?!**

Over the last several weeks, we have completed a series on building solid marriages, solid families and a solid social renewal for world societies. Our intent has been to supply edifying information.

But in those messages we qualified success with Job's exception of divinely-allowed failures, and that can cool our ardor!

For example, in our section on handling family finances, I said that it might be God's will for the believer go bankrupt, so all of the input on making and handling finances could come to a sudden **halt!**

The same could be true with one's marriage. Job's wife deserted him, telling him to curse God and die, Job 2:9. It is possible for one to be upright with God as was Job (Job 1:1, 8), to be industrious and caring as Job was (Job 1:5) and **still, under the plan of God**, to see his or her spouse **leave** under similar depressing circumstances!

These questions unavoidably arise: "(1) Well, if God permits me to go into bankruptcy no matter how well I heed His Word, or if He allows things to bust up my marriage or family life even if I am godly as was in the case of Job, WHY DO SUCH BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE?! (2) If God allows these tragedies to occur in my life, what am I supposed to do to handle them well?!"

(We turn to the "need" section of the message...)

Need: "Harold Kushner's popular book, When Bad Things Happen to Good People, concludes that God isn't in control of everything and is thus limited from helping innocent people escape bad events in their lives (Bib. Sac., v. 151, no. 604, p. 40). But Scripture teaches that God IS in control of 'all things' for believers (Rom. 8:28), so how do we explain why bad things happen to them?!"

- I. **Though he was a good man, Job experienced enormous, unexplained catastrophes in his life, Job 1:1-19; 2:7-9:**
 - A. According to **God**, Job was the most upright man alive, Job 1:1, 8.
 - B. Yet in spite of this uprightness, Job experienced enormous trials:
 1. Invading bands killed his employees and stole Job's goods, destroying his business and source of income, Job 1:14-15, 17.
 2. Lightning fell, doing more damage to Job's possessions, 1:16.
 3. Then a powerful wind destroyed Job's children as it caused a building to collapse upon them, Job 1:18-19.
 4. Job became afflicted with a form of leukemia, creating immense discomfort, Job. 2:7-8 with Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, fn. to Job 2:7.
 5. Finally, his wife gave up, telling Job to curse God and die, 2:9! Her words are a veiled call for suicide, *Ibid.*, Bib. Sac., p. 409.
 6. Besides, these things happened suddenly in quick, overwhelming and psychologically draining succession, Job 1:16a, 17a, 18a.
 - C. Job had no explanation as to why these things had come upon him!
- II. **Though he at first responded nobly (Job 1:20-22; 2:10), Job soon felt pressured and required an explanation from God, 3:1-3; 31:35.**
- III. **Unknown to Job, his troubles were a test permitted by a Sovereign God to reveal Job's uprightness to Satan :**
 - A. God wished to demonstrate the uprightness of Job, 1:8-12.
 - B. However, SATAN felt that God's blessing of Job hindered the exposure of Job's real heart, Job 1:9-10.
 - C. Accordingly, to prove the depth of Job's uprightness, God **let Satan** bring all sorts of trouble on him, Job 1:10-12; Job 2:4-6.

- IV. When Job demanded an explanation from God as to why this apparently unfair trouble was his (Job 31:35), to keep the contest going to the honor of God AND Job, God did not explain the "WHYS," but required that Job trust Him as his Sovereign Lord, Job 38:1-3; 41:1,33-34!
- Had God explained the reason for Job's troubles as being the contest between God and Satan over Job's faith, Job would have known too much to be able to trust God, and that would have tainted the test!
 - Had the contest been tainted, God could not have defended Job's character before Satan's charges to the contrary**, 1:9-11!
 - So **because He is so GOOD**, God laid His own reputation with **Job** on the line to defend **Job's character** before **Satan**: God showed Job only nature's wonders. This action revealed that Job could not always understand God, and that he was going to have to trust God's workings with no explanation for his trials, 38:1-3.
 - The final illustration was the crocodile, an animal with ferocious power, 41:1-34. The theme is this: if God made this animal that no man can handle, how can Job **demand** an explanation regarding his calamities from the One who **made** that ferocious reptile?
- V. **Realizing that he had overstepped his bounds in expecting a divine answer, Job repented of insubordination and stayed content to believe God while not knowing WHY he had trials, 42:1-6!**
- VI. **Accordingly, Job passed the contest between God and Satan. Therefore, God also HONORED Job before Satan with a double restoration of all that he had lost, 42:10-17 & James 5:11b.**

Application: *To handle the question of why bad things happen to good people, like Job, (1) obey God, which today includes our believing in Christ for salvation from sin, Acts 17:30; Jn. 3:16 with Job 1:8. (2) We must then fellowship with God as did Job in Job 1:5 by (a) confessing any personal sins we do (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) depending upon the Holy Spirit for behavior control (Gal. 5:16-23). (3) Then, if astonishingly bad things occur in our lives, and God seems content to leave them unexplained, instead of struggling with it, recall that there is an abundantly marvelous explanation that cannot now be given, and be content to rest in the unexplained mysteries of our Great, GOOD Lord!*

Lesson: *(1) Bad things happen because there is a Devil. (2) Bad things happen to good people not because God cannot control events, nor because He is secretly evil, but to glorify God in the angelic conflict as He works the greatest good in that conflict AGAINST EVIL!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message...)

One of our missionaries, Bob Bouffard, who works with the American Mission to Open Churches, reported to me how God took what seemed to be a no-win situation we as a church at Nepaug once experienced and turned it into enormous eternal good!

Bob used to be a regular attender at Nepaug, and was very involved in the process of my coming to Nepaug Church as pastor.

Bob recalls how difficult things were for the church when I arrived as we were not a fully united church.

I used to wonder WHY God allowed such trials. Then Bob shared with me something that happened in a Bible Church where he was asked to speak in upstate New York.

Bob noticed that the church was without a current pastor, that it was looking for a new one, and was also full of disunity. When he got up to speak, instead of reporting on his work with AMOC, Bob addressed the problem of disunity in that Bible church. He told them that his pastor back in Connecticut had come into the church when it was still disunited on various issues, making it difficult on him and the church when he came. Bob went on to say that the people needed to settle their differences BEFORE the new man arrived so that the church's ministry could advance once he came.

The church responded well, thanking Bob for his insightful testimony regarding Nepaug, and settled its internal differences. In fact, before the new pastor arrived, the Church actually started to GROW! When he did come, the church's ministry even blossomed.

Bob Bouffard then relayed to me, "Well, Don, the Lord has kept another church out of deep troubles because of what you all have had to overcome in the past at Nepaug! There has been good out of it all after all!!"

Hearing that testimony really encouraged me! God, Who is so GOOD, worked beyond our limited understanding to allow trials to come to Nepaug that a greater good might be accomplished! Because of His plan to allow us as a body some tough times, **another** church **thrives** in upstate New York! We now have a spiritual investment in that church that we don't even know which will become evident when we stand before the Lord in at the Judgment Seat of Christ! **It was worth it all after all!!**