

## Why Does God Let Bad Things Happen To Good People?

(appropriate for Mid Schoolers and older)

Michael R. Daily, December 2014

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Why does God let bad things happen to good people?

### There Are No Good People

#### Romans 3:9-12

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; 10 as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; 11 There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; 12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one."

The Bible says that we are all sinners

#### (Romans 3:23)

**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**

and deserve to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. Its only by God's grace and the sacrifice of His Son on the Cross that we are allowed to spend eternity in paradise with God forever and ever (if we give our lives to God and receive Christ as our Savior and Lord).

The truth is, anything we receive from God that is short of the Lake of Fire – that's a good deal for us!

### Our Current Situation & The Purpose of Life

In 2013, terrorist bombs went off at the Boston Marathon. Some people died, others lost their legs, maimed for the rest of their lives. And God let it happen. Why?

Let's start with a clear understanding of what the purpose of life on the Earth is and what our current situation is. The purpose of life is not to be happy, fulfilled, or satisfied. Why? Because we live in enemy territory in the middle of a war!

#### Ephesians 6:10-17

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, <sup>15</sup> and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; <sup>16</sup> in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. <sup>17</sup> And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Do you put on armor to go on vacation? No. Do you put on armor to go to Disneyland? No. You put on armor because you are in the middle of a war.

We live on a planet ruled by an evil supernatural being, satan,

**I John 5:19 - We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of* the evil one.**

So, we are not only living in a war zone, we are behind enemy lines living in enemy territory.

Satan has imprisoned non-Christians and controls them.

### **II Timothy 2:24-26**

**The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, <sup>25</sup> with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup> and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.**

We live in a decaying body whose desires are constantly set against the will of God, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year - including Christmas!

### **Romans 7:21-25**

**I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. 22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.**

We struggle everyday with a world system that is hostile to God's Word and His values.

### **Romans 12:1-2**

**Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.* <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**

Each day that passes brings us closer to facing our final enemy, death

### **(Hebrews 9:27)**

**And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment**

*Key Point: We live in a war zone, behind enemy lines, surrounded and outnumbered by people under the control of an evil archangel, inside a decaying body that is opposed to the will of God, immersed in a world system designed to constantly keep us off balance and put us at a disadvantage, knowing that each day that passes takes us closer to meeting our final enemy, Death.*

In fact, if it wasn't for the grace of God restraining evil in the world life on the earth would be like living in a horror movie. The horror movie actually will occur during the last 3.5 years of the Tribulation but for now the Holy Spirit restrains evil, otherwise things would be much worse than they are.

Is it any wonder that bad things happen to us and other people?

If your goal is to find happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction in this life without God, you are going to be terribly disappointed - just read the Book of Ecclesiastes.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:16-17**

**Furthermore, I have seen under the sun *that* in the place of justice there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness. <sup>17</sup> I said to myself, "God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man," for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.**

That's why Jesus came to the Earth, to save us from this hopeless situation and give us happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction for all of eternity in the next life. If that is true then why don't we all just immediately go to heaven after we become Christians? Why do we have to hang around down here in this mess?

### **Developing a Godly Faith & a Christlike Character**

Because God has a purpose for us to stay on the Earth a while. The purpose, for you the Christian, is to develop in you a Godly Faith and Christlike Character.

### **Ephesians 4:13**

**“until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”**

### **I Peter 1:6-7**

**“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;”**

A Godly Faith and Christlike Character are the gold in the economy of eternity and God wants you to have as much as you can stand. If He needs to put you through some pain during this life in order for you to get this, He's willing to do it. He loves you too much not to.

Now that we understand what the purpose for life is let's think about this a little bit. What if God never let anything bad happen to people? What kind of world would that be? If God is going to intervene every time someone tries to do something that will have bad consequences what would that teach people? It would teach people that bad things are harmless. Imagine if someone put their hand on a hot stove. What would happen? Nothing. God would intervene and make the hot stove unable to burn anyone. We could skydive without a parachute and what would happen? Nothing.

Every time someone did something foolish or unwise nothing bad would happen to them or anyone else. What would they learn from this? They would learn that wisdom has no value and foolishness is a great way to live! How would this achieve God's purpose in developing in people Christlikeness, wisdom, discernment, prudence, and all of the other character qualities that God highly values for people? It wouldn't. In fact it would do just the opposite.

So, to fulfill the purpose God has for developing our character during our few short years on the Earth,

**(James 4:14) - Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.**

God allows our actions to have consequences, both for ourselves and for other people.

### **Hebrews 12:11**

**“All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”**

### **Galatians 6:7-10**

**Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.<sup>8</sup> For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.<sup>9</sup> Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.<sup>10</sup> So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.**

### **Exodus 34:6-7**

**Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;<sup>7</sup> who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.”**

Having said that, God also remains in control so nothing that anyone else does can affect us without God's permission.

### **Proverbs 21:1**

**“The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.”**

So, God has set up life on the Earth so that it consistently accomplishes His purpose of developing our characters without being more than we can handle.

### **I Corinthians 10:13**

**No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.**

Even though God will not allow it to be more than we can handle, He will often allow it to be far more than we think we can handle. We don't get to decide where that line is. God makes that decision, not us.

Joni Erikson Tada broke her neck when she was 17 and has lived her whole life as a paraplegic. I'm sure she has had times, perhaps even now, when she feels overwhelmed by it, that it is more than she can handle. But what has been the result in terms of eternity? Her life has had a huge eternal impact in the lives of others and in her own character. What would her life have been like if she had not broken her neck? We don't know for sure but most likely the eternal impact of her life would have been less. So, is what happened to her a good deal? It depends who you talk to. People with an eternal perspective would say yes. People who think the Earth is supposed to be heaven would say no. God is supposed to make my life on Earth like heaven and He isn't coming through for me – how dare He!

What about the people at the Boston Marathon? Why might God have allowed those explosions to happen? Perhaps there were non-Christians there who have been deceived into thinking life is good and death isn't something to think about. Having a bomb go off near you makes you realize that you easily could have died today and, in fact, you could die tomorrow and are you ready? If not you better take action and get ready. Perhaps there was a Christian there who wasn't seriously living for eternity and now they have to live the rest of their life without one of their legs. It brings things into focus. What am I living for? The pleasures of this life or the next one? I need to get serious about living for eternity.

Because God is a loving Father He also gives us times of happiness and pleasure, just don't make the mistake of thinking that is what life is all about.

### **(James 1:17)**

**Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.**

### **The Value of Pain**

OK, now let's talk about PAIN (isn't this a fun study?). There are many different types of pain in life. There are small, temporary pains and irritations that are constantly coming and going. Getting tired, hungry, sick, getting your feelings hurt, having something you own break, having something you own stolen, the list goes on and on.

### **Ecclesiastes 2:22-23**

**For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun? <sup>23</sup> Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.**

These pains are a constant reminder that we don't belong here, and that our home is in heaven. But with “practice” we can get used to these pains and become numb to them and think everything is great.

Then there are things that cause severe pain but are temporary. One summer, when I was in middle school I was selected for the All-Star baseball team. They selected 2 more boys than they were allowed to have on the team. We then had hard practices everyday for 3 weeks and the coaches decided who would be the starting players, who would be substitute players who mostly sat in the dugout, and which 2 boys would be designated as "alternates". I was selected as one of the 2 alternates. Being an alternate is the worst thing that can happen to you. As an alternate I had to go to the games in my regular clothes and sit in the bleachers. No uniform, no dugout, nothing. I would only suit up and join the team if someone died or was severely injured. I had thought I was going to be an All-Star but instead I was nothing. It was an extremely painful experience but I showed up to ride the bus to our first official game anyway (the other alternate never showed up). It was extremely hot during our first game and no one had brought any water for the players and the rules forbid anyone from leaving the game field and returning. As a result, the boys in our dugout starting asking me to go get them cups of water once the game got started. Now I was demoted down to water boy! I couldn't take it. The pain was so intense I told the whole team (including the coaches), right in the middle of the game, that I was not their water boy and I walked off to the bus and waited for the game to end. This was not a good way to handle the situation but the point is, I had never experienced such a deep level of emotional pain before - anger, sadness, disappointment, humiliation, embarrassment, all rolled into one. I just can't tell you how much it hurt. Nevertheless, it was temporary. The team died of thirst and thankfully (from my perspective) lost the game and was eliminated from the tournament, thus ending the season and my misery. A few months later there would be other sports and after that other baseball teams for me to play on.

But there is another type of pain. This is a severe pain that is permanent. Eventually, there will come a time in life when something will inflict some type of severe pain or loss on us, but this pain or loss will be permanent. It never completely goes away. Why would God allow this to happen? Because God wants to find out, when push comes to shove, what is really in our hearts? When it appears that everything you love on this Earth is stripped away from you what will you do? When every form of encouragement to follow God disappears and there is nothing left except you and God, what will you do? When the future appears to be hopeless, difficult, and painful, what will you do?

Christians respond to these situations in one of three ways. One thing they might do is give up. They feel like they have lost everything that was meaningful to them on Earth and the only future they see on Earth is a painful one. As a result they may kill themselves (bad decision). Another thing they might do is try to find some way to relieve the pain. There are many things on the Earth that can temporarily dull the pain they are feeling. These things include drugs, alcohol, and many other addictive behaviors. At first these things can give the person a feeling of being able to cope with the pain but very quickly these things take over and control the person's life as an addiction. Now the person is in even worse shape. I had a Christian friend who chose this path, became severely addicted to drugs, became even more hopeless, and killed himself. Notice I said Christians. Remember, Christians are sinners. Some have more faith than others. Just because a Christian becomes addicted to drugs or kills themselves doesn't mean they won't go to heaven. Their lack of faith during this test means they will be embarrassed at the Judgment and will forfeit some rewards they otherwise would have gotten but God still forgives them, loves them, and will let them in to heaven. Why? Because they made no claims to be righteous apart from the blood of Christ. So, they still get to go to heaven.

### **1 Corinthians 3:11-15**

**For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

The third option is the right decision. God wants us to get serious about living for eternity instead of for this life. Instead of looking forward to things on the Earth that we like, we replace that with looking forward to the life after this one.

### John 12:24-26

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

We focus our lives on pleasing God, getting to know Him, serving others, helping others know Him, all the while looking to the rewards He will give us at the Judgment.

### II Corinthians 1:3-5

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. <sup>5</sup> For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

### Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

### Philippians 3:7-10

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, <sup>9</sup> and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, <sup>10</sup> that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

This becomes the focus of our lives and, over time, becomes a source of satisfaction and pleasure in this life as well. In other words, the future that appeared to be hopeless, difficult, and painful turns out to not be as bad as we thought and, although it may take a few years to get there, turns out to be better, now that our focus is on the right things. We have passed the test, just as Job did.

**(Job 1:22) - Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.**

God also promises to provide grace for difficult circumstances. He promises that He will never leave us or forsake us.

### Hebrews 13:5-6

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," <sup>6</sup> so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?"

One last thought about suicide. In some cases mental illness is involved, even with Christians. Over time doctors are finding that many forms of mental illness are caused by chemical or physical problems in the brain. These problems in the brain make it impossible for the person to think like a normal brain would think. For example, my mother was a Christian but she struggled with mental illness for all of her adult life. Most of the time she was fine. The doctors gave her medicine which helped her brain work normally. There were a few times when the medicine wasn't quite right and she had to go into the hospital until they got things back in balance but it didn't take very long. Toward the end of her life her brain got out of balance again and this time the doctors could not get it back in balance and she ended up killing herself. Nevertheless, I have no doubt that she is in heaven. Her mental illness was not due to a lack of faith but due to a physical infirmity. The primary reason I became a Christian was because of my mother's example during the times when her brain was working properly.

## **Appendix – Why Did My Father Die?**

Father's die because death is our final enemy and is part of the human condition. But if a child's father dies God says that He will personally fill the role of father for that person, if they want Him to.

### **Psalm 68:5-6**

**A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation. <sup>6</sup> God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.**

### **Psalm 146:8-9**

**The LORD opens *the eyes of* the blind; The LORD raises up those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous; <sup>9</sup> The LORD protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow, But He thwarts the way of the wicked.**

### **Deuteronomy 10:17-18**

**For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. <sup>18</sup> He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing.**

Think about that. If your father dies and you ask God to personally fill your father's spot Himself, He will!

While everyone else only has imperfect human fathers yours will be the perfect, all powerful, infinite God.

He will do some special things for you that children with regular fathers will never experience. But only if you believe what He says and ask Him.

See how that works? It always comes back to faith.

When push comes to shove do you really believe that what God says is true?

**QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD**

**JEREMIAH 15:16**

**THEME: *Why Does God Let Bad Things Happen To Good People?***

**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 3:9-12,23***

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

**When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:**

**How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?**

**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Ephesians 6:10-17***

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Ecclesiastes 3:16-17***

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *James 4:14***

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Hebrews 12:11, Galatians 6:7-10, Exodus 34:6-7***

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Proverbs 21:1, I Corinthians 10:13***

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *John 12:24-26***

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Corinthians 1:3-5, Romans 8:18***

**How does this passage relate to the theme?**

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Philippians 3:7-10, Job 1:22, Hebrews 13:5-6***

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**PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Psalm 68:5-6, Psalm 146:8-9, Deuteronomy 10:17-18***

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