



# The Word at Work

God is good.....

## ..so why do bad things happen?

### Reading the Word

**Key Scriptures:** Phil1:12-30

### **Key Points:**

It is not wrong to ask this question but we must be careful that our answer to it doesn't end up undermining the truth that God is good.

### **Wrong Answers**

Some pious, religious answers end up doing this. For example:

- *Sovereignty* – God is in control of everything so he must have caused it to happen
- *Mystery* – God must have a higher purpose for your suffering that you cannot understand

But – in his *sovereignty*, God chose to create a world where we had free choice and could rebel against him; suffering comes not because of God's will but because we have transgressed God's will (this does not mean that every individual experience of suffering is a result of sin but that we live in a fallen world because of sin).

Suffering does not come from God but from the devil and, although God can turn the bad things around and bring good out of them, he does not want to fill our life with trouble for some higher purpose. He wants to fill our life with blessings and good things. There *are* things beyond our comprehension, but we must not use *mystery* as a rug to sweep all the difficult things of life under, and certainly not use it to misrepresent God's character.

### **Understand that Different Sources of Trouble Require Different Responses**

We are warned that we will face trouble in this life (John 16:33) but it comes for different reasons or from different sources.

*The first 3 lie within our power to do something about, to a certain extent at least:*

#### **1. Discipline from God**

Some hardship comes because God is disciplining us as his children:

*Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons.*

Hebrews 12:7

When people fail to heed his discipline then the result can be serious, especially if it involves dishonouring Christ (1 Cor.11:27-32)

But discipline is actually for our good (Heb.12:10) so it confirms rather than contradicts God's goodness.

Also, when a good father disciplines his child, he does it despite his actual desire which is to bless and do good for his child; the child's behaviour has made discipline necessary but the overall will and desire of the father is to bless. So it is with our heavenly father.

*Response:*

- Learn the lessons quickly, repent and start obeying God
- Learn to discipline yourself so that you don't need to be disciplined (1 Cor.11:31)

#### **2. Opposition from Satan**

All bad things ultimately come from our enemy, the devil. Some are direct attacks from him.

Sickness is something that comes from the devil (Acts 10:38). It does not come from God and, on the cross, Jesus provided the basis for our healing and health. (See the Clearground booklet on Faith and Healing).

Instead of passively accepting such bad things, we need to learn to fight the fight of faith and resist the enemy:

*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

James 4:7

We will have to continually take our stand (Eph.6:13) and keep fighting until we see the deliverance. Like the Israelites in the book of Joshua, God in his goodness has given us a land of promise but we have to go in and possess it, fighting the enemies that would try to prevent us.

Even if you do not experience the victory straight away, make sure you don't bring the word of God down to your experience but bring your experience up to the word of God.

*Response:*

- Resist the devil

### **3. Result of our own foolish choices**

God has created us in such a way that we have the free will to choose to follow his ways or not.

*This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live*

Deuteronomy 30:19

When we foolishly make wrong choices despite the clear teaching of the Bible and the advice of godly leaders, we only have ourselves to blame.

*Response:*

- Learn and grow by making better choices

*The final two lie less within our control to do anything about but we can decide how we are going to respond to them:*

### **4. Suffering for the sake of Christ**

When Paul was in prison he rejoiced because:

- He knew God was turning it to good (Phil.1:12,18)
- He knew that God was going to deliver him (Phil.1:19)

He held on to this faith, but he was ultimately able to rejoice because the gospel mattered more to him than his own life.

*But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, Philippians 2:17 (NLT)*

This is because he knew that to die was to be with Christ (Phil.1:19-26). We can see that he was able to rejoice in suffering because:

- He loved Jesus more than his own life
- The eternal realm was more real to him than the earthly, temporary realm (see 2 Cor.4:16-18; Rom.8:18)

If we see life as being just about our self and about this present life, we will not have the inner resource to rejoice in suffering

*Response:*

- Rejoice and hold on to your faith

### **5. Life in a fallen world**

There is trouble that comes not because we have done anything wrong, are being attacked by Satan, made silly choices or because we are suffering for the gospel. Some stuff just happens – because we live in a fallen world

We can be affected by the same things that happen to other people – we may be affected but we don't have to be defeated.

We have to take the same attitude as with suffering for the gospel, believing that God will work things together for good and that he will deliver us – he will bring us through

*Response:*

- Draw strength from God (through choosing to rejoice)
- Draw strength from one another (Phil.1:27-30)

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