

## **Bad Things Happen to Good People**

Job 1:20-22

### **I. INTRODUCTION: 1, 2**

- I. **3** Many books have been written to try to help people understand how “bad things can happen to good people.”
  - A. We think that as long as we go along in life, minding our own business and harming no one, we can sail along without ever having any problems.
  - B. People have been asking this question for thousands of years, ever since humans first walked the earth: “If I’m doing everything right, how can everything go so wrong?” Is this a valid question to ask, or am I wrong to ask it?
2. Let’s examine the question in light of the Scriptures.

### **II. DISCUSSION:**

#### **I. 4 Examples of bad things happening to good people:**

##### **A. \*\* Prophets**

- (1) A prophet is a spokesman for God; men sent by God to preach to the people.
- (2) However, despite the fact that these men were preaching on God’s behalf, bad things happened to them (e.g., Jeremiah put in a dungeon; **Jer. 38:6**: “So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king’s son, which was in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire.”; others: **Heb. 11:36-38**: “And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”)
  - (a) Jesus condemned the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:31 when He said, “Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.”
  - (b) Remember Jesus’ lament in Luke 13:34: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her...”
  - (c) Stephen alluded to the mistreatment of the prophets in his sermon (**Acts 7:51-52**: “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,”)

##### **B. 5 Stephen:**

- (1) In the previous point, we noticed how the prophets had bad things happen to them despite their good lives and brave service to God.
- (2) Stephen referred to that fact when he answered his accusers, and, in **Acts 7:54-60**, Stephen himself was stoned.

##### **C. 6 Paul:**

- (1) People who appreciate the apostle Paul’s importance to the growing church would not question how good a person he was.
- (2) Despite that fact, he still suffered in his earthly life, and we have a list of some of the bad things that happened to him in **2 Corinthians 11:22-33** (cf. **2 Cor. 4:8-9**: “We are hard-pressed on

every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed —“).

#### D. 7 Church in Smyrna:

- (1) A church mentioned in the New Testament had to go through sufferings.
- (2) In Revelation 2:10, we read, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”
- (3) Perhaps a time will come when this church is persecuted (e.g., standing against homosexuality); will we “Be faithful unto death...”?

#### E. 8 All Christians:

- (1) We should not be surprised if bad things happen to us.
- (2) We are warned of this in 2 Timothy 3:12, when we read, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”
- (3) We should never think that suffering is reserved for the wicked or those who think that they are out of favor with God (**Eccl. 9:11**: “I returned and saw under the sun that — The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all.”).
- (4) In fact, Philippians 2:5-8 teaches that Jesus suffered despite the fact that He was the Son of God (**Matt. 10:24-25**: “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!”).

#### 2. 9 What are some reasons that bad things happen to good people? (Perhaps it would be better to say: How can we use bad circumstances to our benefit?)

##### A. \*\* To produce patience, endurance and hope:

- (1) James teaches us that trials produce patience in **James 1:2-4**: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”
- (2) We all need to develop patience! Why? **Gal. 6:9**: “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”
- (3) Ultimately our suffering bolsters our hope (**Rom. 5:3-4**: “...but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”)
- (4) No wonder James says they will be counted blessed who endure in **James 5:10-11**: “My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. 11 Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord — that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.”

##### B. 10 To give us a cause to have joy:

- (1) James and Peter teach us that trials can cause us to have joy in Jas. 1:2 and **1 Peter 1:6**: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials.”
- (2) Remember how the apostles reacted to trials? **Acts 5:40-42**: “...apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

- (3) Persecution puts us in elite company! **Matt. 5:11-12:** “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*”

**C. 11 To refine us (make us purer) as precious gold: **Psa. 11:5:** “The Lord tests the righteous...”**

- (1) Our suffering serves an important function as Peter wrote about in 1 Peter 1:7: “*That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*”
- (2) The reason our suffering is important is because it makes us better or worth a whole lot more.
- (3) There is a saying that goes like this, “Whatever doesn’t kill you makes you stronger.” But in service to God even if we’re killed we become stronger! **Rev. 2:10:** “*Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*”

**D. 12 That we may be able to comfort others in trouble:**

- (1) When we suffer ourselves, we are in a better position to help someone else.
- (2) Have you: suffered the loss of a loved one? Experienced a severe financial crisis? Victim of a betraying spouse? If so, and your faith survived the test you are a valuable asset to others! Turn it to good! **Jas. 1:2; Gal. 6:2:** “*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*”
- (3) 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 states, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*”

**E. 13 That we should not trust in ourselves:**

- (1) We learn another valuable lesson when we suffer: we cannot trust in ourselves. **2 Cor. 1:9-10:** “*Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, I O who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.*” We all need to learn this lesson: We need God and His help!
- (2) What attitude should we have when suffering takes place? A great example - the apostles in Acts 5:41. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Lord. Notice what Peter says (**1 Pet. 1:3-9**).

**III. CONCLUSION: 14**

1. If you are a Christian who is suffering, for these reasons you can rejoice: because suffering will make you stronger, you can turn around and encourage others, and your suffering can be an opportunity for you to tell others why you are rejoicing in the midst of your trials.
2. You may have heard it said that “God doesn’t waste anything.” We should not waste any opportunity to glorify God and influence others to believe in Him, even if that means rejoicing in suffering.
3. Suffering can tempt us to feel weary in serving God; it can deeply challenge our faith. But we must remember Paul’s words to the Galatians. Brethren, “*let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*” (6:9).
4. Suffering is not necessarily an indication of wrong-doing (Lk. 13:1-5); Eccl. 9:11:

*I returned and saw under the sun that —  
The race is not to the swift,  
Nor the battle to the strong,  
Nor bread to the wise,  
Nor riches to men of understanding,*

*Nor favor to men of skill;  
But time and chance happen to them all.*

5. Let us turn the tables on suffering and use it for our good!

Adapted from an article, *Bad Things Do Happen to Good People*, by Evan Casey.