

"WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE "

(Adversity: God's Unwanted Blessing)

We all face adversity (negative things) at times in our lives (e.g. financial loss, health problems, relationship struggles, death of loved ones, etc.). Question is – why? Christians we can rest in the bottom line answer that Pastor Mike recently drew from the story of Job:

Knowing that there is a personal God who is supreme, sovereign, and compassionate – means that even in my suffering there always be an “answer.” However, in my suffering, I will not always be given an “answer.”

Today we want to build upon that foundational biblical truth, and look at the potential reasons for – and blessings from – the adversity God allows in our lives. We want to move from mere acceptance of adversity to appreciation for the benefits that can come from adversity.

Key Biblical Principle #1: God loves us deeply, and created us hoping that we would choose to have a personal relationship with Him. Having a personal relationship with us brings God pleasure! (Ephesians 1:3-5; Acts 17:24-27)

The primary way that God the Father shows us His love is by sending His Son Jesus Christ to come to earth and pay our sin debt on the cross. “God made Him who had no sin (Jesus) to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (II Corinthians 5:21). “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 3:23, 6:23).

To have our sins forgiven and start a personal relationship with God the Father and His Son Jesus we must believe in and receive the gift of salvation that Jesus offers. “... to all who **received** Him, to those who **believed** in his name, He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

Key Biblical Principle #2: For people that are not yet Christians, God sometimes allows adversity as a “wake- up call” – hoping that a person will think about spiritual things and eternity. (Luke 15:11-32; 12:13-21)

Key Biblical Principle #3: For Christians, the primary reason why God allows adversity is because He loves us and wants to provide special benefits (blessings) that only come through adversity!! (Romans 8:28; book of Job, etc.)

Question: What are the causes for the adversity that Christians face?

Since God is sovereign (all powerful), He must either allow or sometimes cause any adversity that comes our way. There are several potential causes for adversity in our life:

- 1) **SOMETIMES** adversity is a result of our own bad choices. Sometimes we “reap what we sow” (Galatians 6:7).

Galatians 6:7 “Do not be deceived! God cannot be mocked. A man **reaps** what he **sows**”.

- a) Sometimes adversity (but not always!) may be a consequence of our sins. In this case, God may be administering earthly discipline based on his love (Hebrews 12:5-11; example of David and Bathsheba).
 - b) Sometimes may be a consequence of a foolish decision by us (example: walk on icy sidewalk to fast or without proper shoes and suffer a concussion).
- 2) **SOMETIMES adversity is a result of living in a temporarily fallen world.** Included is persecution for being a Christian (John 15:18-21; I Peter 4:12-19).
 - 3) **SOMETIMES adversity is caused by supernatural powers other than God** (Job 1:12; Luke 22:31).

Keep in mind that God is far more powerful than Satan or any other fallen angel, God limits what Satan can do, and remember what Satan intends for evil, God can use for good (I John 4:4, Genesis 50:20; book of Job).

- 4) **SOMETIMES adversity is a test of our faith.** It is an opportunity to demonstrate that we are committed to God in not only the good times, but also the bad times. Allows us to send a message to people and the spiritual beings around us (book of Job; James 1:12).
- 5) **ALWAYS adversity is allowed or caused by God because He loves us and wants to provide special benefits (blessings) that only come through adversity!!** (Romans 8:28; book of Job, etc.).

Question: What are the potential benefits that adversity can bring?

- 1) **Intended to bring glory to God (John chapter 9; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10).** People can see God work. Human weakness provides opportunity for God to display His power.

Read John 9:1-11

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 "... my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness..."

- 2) **Can benefit other people:**
 - a) Others can see God at work (John 9:1 – 11).
 - b) Others can see us model how to deal with adversity (Philippians 4:9)
 - c) People will eventually be better ministered to as we become better equipped (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
 - d) Gives other people the opportunity to minister to us (remember: "better to give than receive" Acts 20:35).

- 3) **Can provide opportunity for people to use their gifts and to minister in practical ways; can help unify the body of Christ** (Romans 12:4-8, 13; I Cor 12:24-27; Phil 4:10-19).

Case Study: Bonnie Schenidau

- 4) **Can result in many benefits to us:**

- a) Enhances our eternal focus and perspective (2 Corinthians 4:17-18; I Peter 1:3-9; Romans 8:18-25).

2 Corinthians 4:17 “For our light and **momentary troubles** are achieving for us an eternal glory that **far** outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal”.

- b) Draws us to God – helps us learn to rely on Him, not ourselves (2 Corinthians 1:8-11, 12:7-10; I Kings 19:1-18; Psalms 33:16-18).
- c) Helps develop our character and helps us become more like Jesus (Romans 5:3-5, 8:28-39).
- d) Helps build our faith and our perseverance (I Peter 1:3-9; James 1:2-4).

Read: I Peter 1:3-9

- e) May be a pruning experience that helps us bear more fruit in the future (John 15: 1-2; Matthew 6:25-34; Philippians 3:13-14). Purpose of pruning is to make our primary priority to bear fruit for God.
- f) May be constructive and straighten out our path. God disciplines those that He loves and it’s always for our good (Hebrews 12:5-11; Psalms 94:12-13; Proverbs 3:11-12). Remember: there is no eternal punishment of any kind for Christians! (Romans 8:1; II Corinthians 5:18-21; Colossians 2:13-14).

Hebrews 12:5-11: ”...do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because **the Lord disciplines those He loves** ... God disciplines us for our **good** that we may share in His **holiness**. No discipline seems pleasant at the time ... Later it produces a **harvest of righteousness** and **peace** for those that have been **trained** by it”.

- g) Can better prepare us to minister to others that may have similar experiences (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
- h) Can help us be more emphatic, sympathetic and compassionate (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
- i) May build greater humility into our lives (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
- j) May help us have greater appreciation for what God has given us; may build greater patience in our lives as we wait on Him (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Question: How should we deal with adversity?

- 1) **If sin is a cause, confess and repent** (I John 1:9).
- 2) **Have faith that God is in control, and keep a positive attitude** (Hebrews 10:38, 11:1, 6; book of Job; I Thessalonians 5:16-18).

I Thessalonians 5:16-18: “Be **joyful always**; pray continually; give **thanks in all** circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”.

- 3) **Remember: for Christians, all suffering and adversity is temporary!! It will either end while you are still on this earth, or it will end when you go to Heaven!**
- 4) **Keep an eternal perspective** (I Peter 1:3-9; Romans 8:18-25).
- 5) **Draw close to Jesus and partner with Him to make it through the adversity** (Philippians 4:13; Acts 7). Remember that God is the “Father of Compassion” and the “God of all comfort” (I Corinthians 1:3).

Philippians 4:13 “**I can do all things through Jesus** who strengthens me”

- 6) **Pray! Pray for God to be glorified, for His purposes in your lives and others to be accomplished, and pray for deliverance at His timing** (Philippians 4:4-8; I Peter 5:7; Hebrews 4:14-16; I Thess 5:18).

Hebrews 4:14-16: “...we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses ... let us **then approach the throne of grace with confidence**, so that we may receive **mercy** and find **grace** to help us in our time of need”.

Read: Philippians 4:4-8

- 7) **Spend time in the word, then put it into practice and think rightly** (Luke 6:46-49, 11:28; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; Joshua 1:4-8; Psalms 1).
- 8) **Seek and accept support, encouragement and prayers from others** (Romans 12:15; I Corinthians 12:25-26; 2 Corinthians 1:8-11; Galatians 6:2).
- 9) **If suffering for the Christ sake, take solace in the great reward you will someday receive** (Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; I Peter 4:12-19; Acts 5:41; 2 Timothy 1:8-9).

Take it Away:

God loves us deeply, and allows negative things in our lives to bring about positive blessings that we would otherwise not enjoy.