

**Dear Fellow Redeemed,**

In our service so far, God has encouraged us for times of tragedy, by reminding us of His faithful love and urging us to simply trust Him and not become bitter or angry about it. But that still doesn't answer the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" That is really one of the main issues the book of Job deals with.

Job is described as being "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil." Job 1:1 Then Satan came along and said to God, the only reason Job is faithful to you is because you have blessed him so abundantly. If you take away what he has, "He will surely curse You to Your face!" Vs. 11 So God said, OK do whatever you want to all his family and his possessions. Just don't touch his body.

Do you ever wonder, why did God give in to Satan so easily? God could see in Job's heart and know if his faith was genuine. He didn't need to prove it to Satan. Job showed a remarkable faith. After all that happened, he worshiped God and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21 Then Satan comes back and says, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" Job 2:4-5 And God said, "Ok!" Go ahead and torment Job "but spare his life." So Satan inflicted Job with painful sores all over his body.

Why would God allow this? Doesn't it seem very unfair? After all, he was "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil." God promises that the godly will flourish "like a tree planted by the rivers of water." This is hardly flourishing. It seems so arbitrary and unloving, doesn't it? Job didn't deserve that! That might make us afraid of what God might do to me!

So the question really is not just "Why do bad things happen to good people?" but  
**"Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?"**

That is one of the important questions God answers for us in this book. The heart of the answer comes through one of Job's friends named Eliphaz. Not everything these friends say was right. God rebuked them all for "darkening counsel with words without knowledge." However, Eliphaz did state a truth of Scripture that God confirms in several other passages. It gives us a very reassuring answer to this puzzling question. Job 5:17-21:

*"Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.  
18 For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal. 19 From six calamities he will rescue you; in seven no harm will touch you. 20 In famine he will deliver you from death,  
and in battle from the stroke of the sword. 21 You will be protected from the lash of the tongue, and need not fear when destruction comes."*

Remember those words always, "Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty." Job's suffering was not just an arbitrary or uncaring act of God. No, this was a loving act of discipline. As God says, "The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." Heb. 12:6 God was correcting something

wrong in Job's heart, but what was it? Job was "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil." Job 1:1 That is what everyone saw. A very good, honourable man! He was a faithful believer, but God saw something deep in his heart, a deadly cancerous growth.

What was it? It is one that every faithful believer is predisposed to. It is the pride in thinking, "Yea, I really am a good person." Even if Job never said it, that was his underlying attitude and no one knew it except God. So, like a skilled surgeon with his scalpel, God used these troubles to expose that sinful attitude and removed the deadly growth in Job's heart before it could destroy Him. This may be a little different picture of Job than you had before, but it becomes clear when you listen to Job's words. Job's first response to the disasters was very commendable. Even when he was covered with painful sores Job said, "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"

When Job's friends heard about what happened to him, they came to visit. They could see how miserable Job was and so they simply sat silently with Job for seven days without saying a word. During those 7 days, Job was mulling over everything that happened, and the cancer began to reveal itself. We may think that the friends were the ones to accuse Job and make him start to question God's goodness. But not so! Job was the first to break the silence and began a very bitter lament. We read in chapter 3, "Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth." He said, "May the day of my birth perish." Vs. 3 He wished he had never been born. Then the inevitable questions began, Why? It started with "Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?" God, why did you let me live to experience all of this great suffering?

His friends may have been surprised by this uncharacteristic outburst from Job. Eliphaz was the first to respond. He seemed a little nervous to respond. He says, "If one attempts a word with you, will you become impatient? But who can keep from speaking?" 4:2. He had to say something.

Then Eliphaz says something else very interesting. "Surely you have instructed many, and you have strengthened weak hands. Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, And you have strengthened the feeble knees; but now it comes upon you, and you are weary; It touches you, and you are troubled." Isn't that interesting? Job had comforted and encouraged many others in times of trial, but now that he is suffering, he doesn't take his own words to heart. That already may indicate something wrong in his heart. Then Eliphaz ventures to comfort Job. He basically says, things like this don't happen for no reason. Then he reminds Job of an important truth, "Resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the simple." 5:2. He was warning Job, the resentment and you are expressing is not good for you. It will only make your misery worse, and can ultimately destroy your faith.

Then Eliphaz gets to the important truth of our text: "Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty." This was absolutely true. He wanted Job to see that God loves him and was doing this for his good, to correct whatever is wrong in your heart. But that only made Job more irate. That of course, implied that Job had something needing to be corrected. So Job began insisting that he didn't do anything to deserve this. Job's bitterness increases and he started his direct complaint against God. "Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, so that I am a burden to myself? Why then do You not pardon my transgression,

and take away my iniquity?”

Then another friend, Bildad, rebukes Job for his brash and bitter words. He says, “How long will you say such things? Your words are a blustering wind. Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?” Job agrees with him, he says, “Indeed, I know that this is true.” 9:2 But he turns it around and resents the fact that he can’t question the Lord. He says, “If He snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, ‘What are you doing?’” Job wants to debate this with God and convince Him that He has treated him unfairly. He concludes, “He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds for no reason. He would not let me regain my breath but would overwhelm me with misery.” 9:17-18

Job’s resentment of God was growing. He says, “Although I am blameless, I have no concern for myself; I despise my own life. It is all the same; that is why I say, ‘He destroys both the blameless and the wicked. When a scourge brings sudden death, he mocks the despair of the innocent.’” 9:21-23. He accuses God of not being fair and just, and worse yet, that God doesn’t care about the innocent. Job’s bitterness against God continues. “I loathe my very life; therefore I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul. I say to God: Do not condemn me, but tell me what charges you have against me. Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands, while you smile on the plans of the wicked?” 10:1-3 “You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit. But this is what you concealed in your heart, and I know that this was in your mind: If I sinned, you would be watching me and would not let my offense go unpunished.” 10:12-14 Oh, what horrible accusations against God! It was like the children of Israel accusing God of bringing them out of their slavery in Egypt just to kill them in the wilderness with hunger or thirst or by the sword of other nations. Job was saying out loud, “God I don’t deserve this! You are not treating me fairly!”

Where did such bitterness against God come from? It wasn’t from the tragedy. That brought it out, but it came from thinking he was a good person and deserved better treatment! Was he upright, fearing God and shunning evil? Yes! That was the work of God in him, but now his sinful heart thought that he deserved better. That is the cancer that lay hidden in Job’s heart. It was a self-righteous pride in his own goodness. Now God had exposed that cancer so that He could remove it. Which He did!

This is the cancer that is ready to take over the hearts of those who serve God faithfully. God declares us righteous by faith in Christ and works His righteousness in us, then our sinful heart is prone to think, I am righteous. And that will always lead to resentment and bitterness when troubles come, “What did I do to deserve this?” Even the question, “Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?”, shows this deadly attitude. That question implies that there are good people that don’t deserve anything bad. And of course, we always choose to use our own standard of good to justify ourselves. I’m a good person because I do this and that. I certainly don’t deserve this. “Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?” The simple answer is, He doesn’t, ever! Because there are no good people! Not by God’s standards. Jesus Himself said, “No one is good but One, that is, God.” If you say, “I don’t deserve this!” You’re right, we all deserve far worse than any trouble we have in this world. If God gave us what we deserve, we would all suffer forever in hell.

Truly “Blessed is the one whom God corrects.” We should thank God for the trials and troubles in our life. They remove that cancer and remind us that we are sinners. Then we will humbly fall before Him seeking His mercy and forgiveness, and we will thank God for all the many undeserved blessing that He does give. Thinking that we are good and deserve better, is poison to our faith. Faith is all about confessing our sin and guilt and looking to God for His mercy, forgiveness and salvation.

Eliphaz was right! “Resentment kills the fool.” Job’s resentment and bitterness against God made his suffering even more unbearable. Worse yet, many, thinking they deserve better, have become disgruntled in times of sorrow and have totally forsaken God. If instead, we know that God is always loving and good and that He disciplines those He loves, for your good, then, instead of getting angry with Him we will turn to the Lord. We will find our help and strength in Him.

Then the rest of our text then gives great comfort. “Do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. 18 For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal.” Instead of questioning God we should question ourselves. What is God trying to correct in me? Examine your heart and your attitudes and turn to the Lord in repentance, acknowledging that you DO deserve this and more. That will make it so much easier to bear the burden at the time, and it will bring God’s healing like it did for Job.

In his misery, Job did say something very interesting. In chapter 9:32-35 “He is not a mere mortal like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were someone to mediate between us, someone to bring us together, someone to remove God’s rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more. Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot.” We do have one who mediates for us with God. God says in 1 Timothy 2:5, “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Jesus is our mediator. He came to rescue us from our sinful heart. He came to take away our sins so that we could be God’s children. And now He intercedes for us before the Father. Because of Jesus we can truly “speak up without fear of Him.” As God says in the book of Hebrews 4:16, we have a High Priest who understands our life and can sympathize with our weaknesses. He intercedes for us. Therefore “Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

So don’t question why does God allow bad things to happen to good people, rather marvel that God does so much good for bad people, even giving His son to take our burdens upon Himself to take away our sins and give us eternal life with Him. Then we will praise Him always, even in the tough times.

Amen.