



Why Do Bad Things Happen? Part One: Good vs Evil

If God Is In Charge, Why Do Bad Things Happen?

Recently, a friend who I helped develop a deeper life with Christ told me she had cancer. Her surgery was successful and she is cancer free now, but it seemed incredible that as young as she was and with a child, she was going through such a traumatic time. I have another friend in the Philippines who waited more than a year to have a gallstone removed. Why did he have to wait so long? People in Ukraine are wondering why they are handed such horrific times. I read of a woman who was born without shin bones because of the radiation poisoning her mother endured at Chernobyl. Her mother turned her over to an orphanage and she was abused and neglected there for years before she was adopted. She had to have both legs amputated. A friend in Liberia is facing the heartbreak of the owner of the building where her church was meeting forcing them out of the facility. A friend on the East Coast has been disabled for forty years after he suffered a terrible fall not long after he served our country in the Navy Seals. Life is tragic and it has been that way since Adam sinned and death became a part of the human condition. Many ask though, why if God is sovereign there is so much bad in life. It is a great question and we will begin to look at that here.

The calamity of Job is where we will start. He of course lost all his children and his fortune in a single day. Next he was leveled by a devastating skin condition that left him in constant pain. Many have experienced each of these sorts of catastrophes but rarely in such quick succession. He was psychologically wrecked and left with many questions for God. Job's friends were of no help; in fact they made it much worse for him emotionally. What strikes me about all this is that as far as Job was concerned, this was purely a matter between him and God. He had no one else he blamed; no other soul to question. How he coped is in many ways miraculous and even far before his encounter with God and the restoration of his life, he made a monumental conclusion that is a shining light for all of us that don't know where to go psychologically or spiritually when we face times that approximate Job's horror. **I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes — I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!** (Job 19: 25-27 NIV)

That is a most incredible declaration on his part. Without any physical evidence to back up this determination, Job built a foundation for coping with great trauma and hardship. My redeemer lives and someday I will be with Him and really see Him. Don't take lightly those words because they are quite profound, especially for someone writing several thousand years before Christ came to bring salvation. The Hebrew term translated "redeemer" is "goail" and describes someone who takes up the cause of another who is weak and needy. Examples would include someone sold into slavery due to impoverishment, a widow, an orphan or anyone who is powerless and oppressed. Job insists that in his brokenness and destitute condition, God is the one who will take up his cause and make it all right in the end. God is not a concept or a fantasy superhero. He is living and real and Job says "I will come upon Him, I will stand before Him and meet Him when this life is finished for me." The end is not the end. God will come to his rescue and free him from all the bad that has come upon him. This is a very precious realization. God loves you and although it is bad now, it will be made good and right because God is real and He is for you.

Admittedly, this takes faith to get to this point and for many a huge step forward in faith because for years perhaps and across the generations that preceded them God has been doubted and disbelieved. He is a pipe dream for many, and they point to all the troubles they face as proof. The troubles are proof, that is true, but not to the weakness or cruelty or non-existence of God but for something else that is true and actual, something that gets at the heart of why there is bad.

Go way back in time, back to when the first two people, Adam and Eve, were living in a garden paradise, enjoying fully a life without death or suffering. Those were wonderful days, nearly unimaginable for us now. No crime, no disease, no family strife, no depression or anxiety, a perfect life they enjoyed. Yet, it all fell apart and it happened rather quickly. We are introduced for the first time to someone called the serpent. **Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden?"**" (Genesis 3: 1 NIV) The last book of the Bible tells us who is spoken of here in the first book of the Bible. **The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.** (Revelation 12: 9 NIV) This is Satan now who came to Eve and he or it laid the foundation for all the evil that will come into the world. Eve responded correctly to this probing by Satan. **The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"** (Genesis 3: 2-3 NIV)

She got that right. God had a plan and it was to teach Adam and Eve the difference between wrong and right; good and evil. Here is the exact command God gave them. **And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."** (Genesis 2: 16-17 NIV) Notice who God did not directly give the command. It was Eve. She had to hear it from Adam and it seems clear Adam did his job. He even made it stronger by adding the addendum. You cannot even touch it. Don't eat it. Don't even touch it. This was God's sovereign determination. Don't eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you do, you will bring death to yourselves. Satan tried to change the dynamic. "You won't die" the serpent insisted. "It will be great for you". Perhaps Satan really thought he could change the outcome. He could keep death out of the equation. After all, his own rebellion brought death into his future already. Maybe Satan had a plan for eliminating the death sentence to the revolt against God he was leading. It certainly makes sense. Otherwise, why would he continue trying to fight against God? He must have believed he could do something to prevent the final judgment. Either way, Satan was able to convince Eve that she would not meet up with death if she ate the forbidden fruit and even better, she would gain something invaluable, the knowledge of good and evil.

Let's look closely at God's sovereign plan for Adam and Eve. Was He intending on keeping from Adam and Eve insight into good and evil? We certainly can't imagine that is the case. Satan already was roaming around the earth and there it was. Evil itself. The plan, as they had free access to the tree of Life was for them to take good into themselves. God would fill them head to toes in body as well as in spirit. They would know good intimately every time they met with God, tasted of His food, walked about in His creation and held hands together. Good was to fill their souls like the water in the six water jars Jesus had the servant fill to the brim without another drop being able to be added or it would spill over the top. Evil would be known as that which was not good, what was outside them and God's world. Satan was evil and when the serpent came up to Eve, she at that moment knew how evil looked. Let me give an example to further explore this. I know what poison is. I understand its effect. I am aware of how poison looks. It may be that I can even tell you how certain poisons smell. I certainly know how rotten meat smells. Do I need to ingest poison to know about it? Will I need to wreck my body to have the knowledge of poison? Certainly not! The same is true of evil. God's sovereign plan was for His people and even perhaps for His angels and other spirit beings to know evil by what terrible destruction it brings but not by ingesting it, not by imbibing in evil and letting it invade the soul through disobedience to God and His Word.

Next time we will examine the invasion of evil in the universe but for now, when evil hits you squarely, whether because you disobeyed God and let it become a part of you or the evil that has invaded this world beats you down, follow in the steps of Job. Practice faith this week, believing God is good and loves you, that He is your redeemer who in the end will make everything right and good for you. Good conquers Evil.