



First Baptist Church Selmer

A JOURNEY THROUGH JOHN • "HOW GOD WORKS" • JOHN 9:1-7 • 2/27/2022

MAIN POINT

God allows bad things to happen to each one of us for our good and His glory.

INTRODUCTION

Does your life history lend itself toward you thinking, "I don't know why I've been so blessed" or "I have had to overcome so much"? What reasons can you think of why God might have given you the life you have had?

How would you respond to someone who says they can't believe in a God who would let bad things happen to good people?

It is an age-old question: "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Though the answers may never be fully realized on this side of heaven (1 Cor. 13:12), today's Scriptures will help us explore the question and invite God to show us what we can know.

UNDERSTANDING

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:1-7.

What assumption did the disciples have about the circumstances into which a person is born? What is wrong with that line of thinking?

An understanding of sinful humanity helps us begin to understand why the disciples were wrong in their thinking. Romans 3:23 lets us know that all of us have sinned and fall short of God's glory. If sin caused physical blindness, then none of us could see a thing! In contrast, Jesus never sinned, yet He suffered terribly; not from physical defect, but at the hands of men.

Why do you think so many of us assume bad things only happen to bad people?

Where did we get this idea?

From this passage, what is one way we can biblically answer the question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?”

What struggle or improper view of God might people have as a result of this answer?

Not only are we all sinners apart from Christ, we also live in a sinful, broken world. Because of this truth, “bad things” are an unavoidable aspect of life and will remain so until Jesus returns to rid our world of sin once and for all. While the disciples were wrong in thinking sin was always the reason for suffering, we cannot deny that sometimes that is the case.

God gives His children their own minds and independent spirits, and one of the results is that we can make our own choices and take our own actions from Him and His will for us. Because God gives us freedom, He also allows us to suffer the consequences for our actions. While not always the case, these consequences can result in suffering and hardships we bring on ourselves. The writer of Hebrews explained that this is a part of God's loving discipline in the lives of His children.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 12:3-11.

How did the writer of Hebrews see the Lord's discipline? Suffering?

Since Jesus never sinned, and He is the illustrative example the writer gives (vv. 3-4), we can understand the word “discipline” in this passage to be largely synonymous with suffering (v. 7), not punishment for wrongdoing but nurture for unpleasant life events that God allows. When we find things not going the way we should, we often think it's evidence of God's anger or absence. But this passage reminds us that when God disciplines us, it's actually evidence of His love. He loves us too much to allow us to go our own way unchallenged.

What question does the writer of Hebrews pose in verse 9? In light of today's study, in what way do we need to “submit . . . and live”?

APPLICATION

Based on these three Scripture passages, how would you respond to someone who asks, “Why do bad things happen to good people?”

How have you seen these truths played out in your own life? How has your faith been refined as a result?

How do you explain why God sometimes delivers you out of hardships, but at other times He allows you to go through them?

PRAYER

Thank God for loving you so much that He will use any means necessary to draw you to Himself. Pray that He would teach you to be a willing participant, acknowledging that you stand on level ground at the foot of the cross with every other human being, regardless of circumstance.

COMMENTARY

| JOHN 9:1-6

9:1. Jesus' identity as "the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12) was illustrated in His sixth and penultimate "sign" recorded in John's Gospel—the healing of a man born blind. As in chapter 5, Jesus healed on the Sabbath and thus suffered persecution from the Jewish leaders. But in contrast to the lame man of chapter 5, who showed no faith and reported Jesus to the authorities, the formerly blind man showed a progression of faith and ended up worshiping Jesus (9:38). Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their spiritual blindness (vv. 40-41).

9:2. The disciples' question reflected the assumption, customary in ancient Judaism, that suffering could be traced to specific sins. The underlying concern of this assumption is to clear God of wrongdoing against innocent people (Ex 20:5; Num 14:18; Dt 5:9). Yet the NT makes it clear that suffering is not always a direct result of a person's sin (Lk 13:2-3; 2Co 12:7; Gal 4:13).

9:3. The light of life did not fix blame but offered grace, so Jesus rejected the alternatives of the disciples. In this man's life, hurting was the preparation for healing. Jesus' words to the disciples in chapter 11 offer insight: "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's son may be glorified through it" (John 11:4).

Comparison of John 5 and 9 leads us to the conclusion that sin may result in sickness on some occasions, but we should never assume an essential connection. God can bring glory to himself through healing as in both of these accounts by John—or through not healing, as we learn later in the New Testament from the struggles of the apostle Paul. The focus is not on the comfort of the creature but the exaltation of the Creator.

9:4-5. The contrast between blindness and sight now moves to the contrast between night and day. Jesus was the sent one, and the disciples assisted him in his work. But this will soon end

when night comes. Night probably refers to the difficult days of the passion week, particularly the cross. If we had only this text, we might conclude that the disciples could function in God's work only so long as Jesus was with them in the world; then all would be darkness.

Interpreters tiptoe around the possible meaning of these verses. The clue may lie in the hermeneutical principle of progressive revelation. The Lord had not yet explained the role of the Holy Spirit in illuminating their future ministry. At this point he focused their attention only on him, his divine mission, and their involvement during the short period of earthly ministry. Later in this Gospel he explained that light would shine again after the resurrection and the ascension as the Holy Spirit reproduced the light of the world through them.

9:6. A strange thing happened as the blind man experienced healing by the Lord. We know Jesus did not need physical substance to work a miracle, so what was the point of the mud on the man's eyes? Some interpreters point out that the Jews believed clay and spittle had some medicinal value, but that would put the power in the instrument rather than the healer.

Others argue that clay often depicts creation in Scripture. But perhaps we can find here something as simple as a man who needed some physical symbol to encourage his faith, not unlike Gideon and his fleece.

| HEBREWS 12:3-11

12:3-4. The word "for" introduces the reason the Hebrew Christians were to fix their attention on Jesus (v. 2). The term "consider" has the idea of weighing something for comparison. The readers were to compare Jesus' enduring hostility with the opposition they were experiencing. Jesus' enduring opposition should have inspired the Hebrew Christians to renew their efforts and helped keep them from growing weary and losing heart. The writer contrasted Jesus' death to the readers' suffering. Evidently they had experienced opposition without loss of life.

12:5-6. The writer reminded his readers of an Old Testament exhortation (encouragement) in Proverbs 3:11-12. Believers were not to view God's instruction or training as insignificant. They were not to grow weary when God reproved them because "God punishes every son . . . He receives." The idea is that in love God allows or inflicts punishment on His people to discipline us. Others note the Hebrew word behind "discipline" and "disciplines" has the ideas of correcting or reasoning. They see the verses as meaning that as a loving father reasons with and corrects his son, God uses difficulty and opposition to train or educate His children.

12:7. The writer urged his readers to endure persecution as opportunities for spiritual growth. They could view hardship as a reason to give up or as training in perseverance. Like all believers,

these were God's children; and far from abandoning them in their trials, God was training them as a human father trained his sons.

12:8. All genuine believers receive God's discipline or instruction. If God had not been training the Hebrew believers, they would have been illegitimate children and not sons. Thus their trials proved they were God's authentic children. When believers recognize difficulties may be God's discipline, they will view them as opportunities for spiritual growth. Doing so will help Christians endure.

12:10. Verse 10 turns from comparison to contrast. Earthly parents discipline their children only for a little while. Children grow up, leave home, and move beyond the discipline of their parents. God, however, never finishes with his children. God disciplines us for a lifetime. For this we should be thankful rather than complaining.

Earthly parents discipline their children as they think best. All of us have made dreadful mistakes in our efforts to discipline our children. Fortunately, God knows precisely what he is doing and disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. God will never commit an overkill, nor will he neglect to give discipline. The fact that we receive discipline from a wise, omniscient God who never errs in his work gives us cause for commitment to his loving discipline.

12:11. This verse contrasts a short-term and a long-term response to discipline. Whenever discipline hits us, it causes pain. We tend to complain under its burden. We find nothing pleasant about the experience. Later, for those who submit to its training, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace.