

Why Does God Allow Bad Things Happen to Good People?

by Doug Hamilton

Lesson Two: The Deeper Understanding as to why God allows "Bad Things" to happen to "Good People"

As we covered in the last lesson, we can never know all the answers as to why good people are allowed to suffer by God. On the other hand, we must struggle to know as much about it as we can, for God more than often makes it apparent if we only look more intently for the answers. With the three clarifications in place from the last lesson, let us look more deeply to the workings of God in relation to the question "Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?"

For Correction

It states in Hebrews 12:7-11 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? ⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness. ¹¹ All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

There are many trials in the Christian's live that are brought on through the natural consequences of bad behavior, for God made it so. He built it into the formula and they cannot be side-stepped.

- The married couple that refuses to put God first in their marriage will often have troubles down the road in their relationship.
- The parent that refuses to involve their children in Christianity will reap the consequences of regret when their offspring goes the way of the world.
- The Christian that embraces the sin of alcohol or drugs will reap what they sow in the consequences of body deterioration and legal problems.
- The Christian who seeks to pursue the last dollar with greed will lose relationships that will hurt in the end.
- The Christian who wants to hold grudges and pursue hate will find himself being alone in the end.

God allows these consequences in order to teach us the error of our way. The hope is if we choose to sin because of not paying attention to His word, then perhaps we will read the consequences and understand. He often sends "bad things" into our lives for correction.

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For Protection

There is an interesting passage in 2 Corinthians 9:7-10 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! ⁸ Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹ And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul was a man whom all Christians should have a great respect for. He made a complete turnaround from a killer of Christians to a maker of the same. He is truly a success in every sense of the word. Yet in the above passage we find that he had a "thorn in the flesh" struggle that was there to keep him from exalting himself. Two possibilities for this thorn in the flesh are the following.

1. He had a severe vision problem. When he wrote to the Galatians, he closed by saying in *6:11 See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.* Combine that with what he said in *4:15 if possible you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me,* he appears to have been suffering from a severe vision problem. Some speculate perhaps his eyes were injured from a prior stoning or persecution.
2. He had a reputation problem. Since he had a past history of killing Christians, many did not trust him even years later when first encountering him. Sometimes our past can be our worst enemy.

Perhaps it was something beyond that; we simply do not know. What we do know is that he had a thorn in the flesh problem and that God was not going to remove it for his protection. Whatever it was remained through God's will lest Paul exalt himself in some way.

There are many times that God shuts a door through circumstance for our own protection, but we might not have even known it. I am convinced there are some that will never have much in this life, not because they didn't try, but because they might have gotten into trouble with money and the root causes of evil that comes with it. There are some that might never find that person they want to marry, not because they did not have the right to, but because they are more effective as a single in the kingdom. Many of the "bad things" we have in life might have been for our own protection.

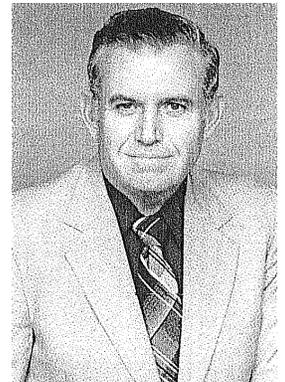
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For Connection

Curtis Harrison had prepared himself well. Two years at the Sunset School of Preaching and six months of training in the School of Missions and he was ready for the field. He and his family arrived in Goroka, Papua, New Guinea in late 1972. Over the next six years he spent time learning the language, teaching and converting souls, training schools and growing the churches. It was hard work and his family felt great to be there serving the Lord.

Then tragedy struck! Quoting the 1979 brotherhood newspaper article, "It was not really like a bolt of lightning; it was more of a gradual deterioration of feeling in the extremities that soon began to manifest itself in growing paralysis of the lower part of the body. Doctors in New Guinea urgently insisted that he return to the States for treatment. The signs were alarming! They knew he would not be back."



In the hospital at Lubbock they discovered a benign tumor intertwined around his spinal cord. He was completely paralyzed from the chest down. Surgeons could offer no hope to survive such an operation. That did not stop thousands of prayers of the saints for a different outcome. Christians from all over the world pulled together as a church family should and did their best to encourage the family with prayers, support and encouragement. He did survive the surgery, but the doctors said he would never walk again. More prayers were offered as they further radiated the tumor. He soon was able to move his feet. Then over the months began to crawl. A short time later was able to stand and eventually was able to walk with the help of crutches.

What was even more amazing was the network of close relationships that had forged in this trial through prayers, letters, visits, meals, rides and dozens of others connecting acts of love. On August 16, 1979, the Harrison family returned to the mission field. There were more than two-hundred Christians that met them at the airport, singing songs of joy with the flowing of tears. The airport officials gave him the VIP treatment of the red carpet. Even the Prime Minister, who happened to be passing through the airport that day, requested to meet the man that God used in such a way. He personally welcomed him back into the country.

It did not end there for Curtis, for when the mission ended and he returned home to Lubbock, Sunset hired him to assist in preacher training. When I arrived in Lubbock for my schooling in 1997, Curtis became a good friend of mine. Upon graduating I met with him in my office and asked for his advice for the question, "As a preacher, how do you know when to move onto a new mission? Five years? 8 years? 10 years?" His simple

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answer has been a beacon to me since. He said, "You stay as long as you are effective with the people you are working with." It was some of the best advice I have ever had as a minister of the gospel.

Through the "bad thing" of a tumor in the spine, Curtis ended up reaching out to more people and with better results than he could have without it.

For Perfection

The scriptures state in *Hebrews 2:10* *For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.* One of the definitions of perfect means to not have sin; Jesus most certainly met that description, for He knew no sin (2 Cor 5:21). That is not the definition here for the word used is *τελειόω* and means to accomplish, complete or fulfill. I was a word used to describe a tool that was custom-made to fit perfectly in the hand of the carpenter. If a tool was *τελειόω*, it was exactly what the carpenter needed. Jesus was *τελειόω* for God, accomplishing all that He was set out to do. He came in the flesh, carried out miracles, taught in parables, changed lives and hearts toward the kingdom of God, did the entire will of the Father and died on the cross for our sins. He was exactly what God wanted. He was the perfect tool in the hands of the Father. More interesting is how He became this perfect tool of the God.

Hebrews 5:7-9 In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. ⁸ Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

This passage, describing the torment in the Garden of Gethsemane leading to the crucifixion, a moment of prayer and full acceptance of the primary theme of the ministry of Christ, was a moment of reflection of suffering. He knew what await Him, the beatings, the mocking, torment, the crucifixion and rejection, yet He conformed to it. He conformed to the plans of God perfectly.

There are many trials in our lives that God allows, not because we desire the pain, but will enjoy the result. James says in *1:2-4* *Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.* We can never become the person that we need to be for God in this life without the aid of suffering.

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1 Peter 2:19-24 For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God. ²¹ For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, ²² WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; ²³ and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴ and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Bad things often happen in the lives of Christians so as to perfect them in preparation for heaven.

There are other reasons why God allows bad things to happen to good people. The four most obvious to me are for reasons of Correction, Protection, Connection and Perfection. In any case, God is in control so don't worry.