

Good Things Happen to Bad People

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[0 : 00] Father in heaven, this morning we come into your presence thankful first of all for the blessing! and for the blessing we have in the Lord Jesus and for the word that you've given to us, for the Holy Spirit upon whom we are dependent for enabling and understanding and application.

And I pray this morning that your word would have free course and bear fruit in the lives of those that are here and know the Lord Jesus as their Savior and that those who may be here today and have not come to faith in Christ, we'd be drawn by grace to see their sin and repent and believe in the Lord Jesus.

We ask in his name. Amen. As we look at this passage, I just want to kind of take a minute to explain that as we're working our way through this, one of the things we're going to be doing is looking at three simple portions of Scripture or three aspects of Scripture.

First of all, is what? And when you look at a Bible passage, the first and most important thing you want to figure out is what is God saying there? His words are to be taken and carefully understood and applied.

And so instead of going off on a tangent and talking about politics or whatever else, we're going to start by looking at the passage itself and seeking to understand what God is saying.

[1 : 27] Now, having said that, I want you to know that a characteristic of Reformed or Puritan preaching is that generally one-third of the sermon, and by the way, they were not brief, just in case you're wondering.

One-third of the sermon was given to the exposition of the text. In other words, here's what God says, and two-thirds of the sermon often was given to explaining, and so how does it fit?

Because the purpose of the study of Scripture is not just, okay, well, I hear what he's saying, and I got that one. No, it's, okay, how do you put that into living? Because as Titus says, and one of the responsibilities we have as a believer is that we adorn the doctrine of God.

Isn't that right? I mean, after all, listening to the preaching of the Word of God should draw us by grace to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ and display His glories.

And so as we are working our way, we're going to look at what does the text say. Secondly, we're going to ask ourselves the question, why is this here? And I trust that when you engage in your personal Bible study, and I trust that you do that on a daily basis, that you spend time in the Word of God privately alone where you are reading the Scriptures, and as you are reading the Scriptures, you are seeking to understand what God has to say.

[2 : 54] And one of the follow-up questions is, and why is that there? What's He telling me? How does it fit? And I would appeal to you that this daily habit will be one of the things that makes a profound difference in your life over the years to come, because you will see that the Word of God frames and shapes your thinking and slowly molds you to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we're going to spend time, what? Then we're going to look at why. And then third, we're going to look at how. How does this fit? And what should I take away when I leave here this morning?

And we're going to look, first of all, at the what. And I read a portion of it here this morning. And we're not going to belabor the what primarily for this reason. I think it is fairly self-evident what the passage is saying.

It's relatively easy to understand in that, in large terms, here is Job in chapter 21 and again in 24.

And as you read the passage, you get the idea that he is rebuttaling.

He is arguing back with his foolish friends who have come to give him advice. He suffered incredibly. And they show up.

[4 : 13] And by now we've been in Job enough that we understand that their line of logic is quite simple. Hey, listen, you did bad things, bad things have happened.

What goes around comes around. You ever heard that one? It's like, yeah, bad things, bad people, bad happens. It's the way it is. And so here is Job as he begins, particularly in chapter 21, verse 1 through 6, kind of summarize it for you.

He says, okay, go ahead. Politely listen to my sorrow. And afterwards, when you're walking away, kind of chuckle to yourself and say, Job doesn't get it. He's just suffering because he's a bad guy. And if he would just say, I'm sorry, it'd be better. Well, Job says, listen, my argument's really not with you.

My argument's with God. And I have suffered incredibly. You see, each of Job's counselors had come to the same conclusion.

[5 : 13] That Job's suffering was of his own making. That he was receiving the outcome of his behavior.

And while they didn't know all the details, they were fully persuaded that if he'd been a good guy, he would have been prospering. And since he now was not prospering without question, there's some things he had done bad.

And we live in a day and age where this idea that good things come to good people, and if you just believe good things, they're going to have good things happen, is really pretty popular.

Isn't it? I have to admit this. As I was preparing for this, I thought I would go ahead and watch Joel Osteen for a couple minutes. I did. I did.

Only about five minutes was all I could take. Well, now was a wonderful day. But the idea is that, you know what, if you're a good person and you believe good things, good is going to happen to you, you know?

[6 : 23] And Job is struck by the shallow lack of observation that his friends have. Now, this idea of karma is kind of in the text.

And what I mean by that is that Job's friends had this idea that you do good and good comes. You do bad and bad comes. And I've got to tell you that karma is not just a Hindu idea.

It is woven into every system of works, righteousness, religion. We've all had conversations with individuals that have gone along these lines where we've maybe asked them the question, So if you were to die tonight and God were to say, why should I let you into heaven?

Well, I've been a pretty good person, right? I mean, I haven't been as bad as my neighbor, and I know him. But I'm trying my best. I love the guy who told me that he'd been keeping the Ten Commandments.

I didn't ask him which of the ten he was thinking about, because I guarantee you the guy could not have recited all ten of them. But this idea that, well, good comes if you're good, and bad comes if you're bad.

[7 : 34] Job, as he deals with the subject, he wants us to understand that that's not just the way it is when you observe, in simple terms, the things that are going on around you.

And as you read Job chapter 21 and 24, you see the evidence that Job is relying upon. And let me just kind of remind you of some of the things that you find here as you look at the passage.

Job, as he looks around, he says, guys, pay attention. What do you see? The wicked are doing pretty well. And if you got your study booklet for the book of Job, and you're on this week's chapter, you would have noticed that Pastor Andrew, when he was writing, he talked about George Santos. And George Santos is not the only individual who we can look at today and say, you know what? Here is a patently wicked man, and he is really doing pretty well.

Getting away with it. And that can be frustrating as you look at this. And so here is Job who, as he is rebuking and rebuttaling his friends who've come to give him advice, he says, guys, look at the evidence around you.

[8 : 55] It's just undeniable. The wicked often get away with being the way they are, and there is not immediate consequence in their life. I want you to go to a complementary passage in relationship to this and turn in your Bible, if you would, to Psalm 73.

Go to Psalm 73. And I'm going to read for you here, verse 2 through 9, if you'll just kind of follow along with me, as the psalmist is putting into words the same logic that Job was relying upon.

But the psalmist in particular is showing a closer emotional interaction as he's struggling with what he's seeing at the moment. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled.

My steps had nearly slipped, for I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Now, none of us would want to admit publicly on a Lord's Day that we occasionally looked

at people who were just scoundrels and we thought, it's not fair that they're getting away with this. Have you done that? I mean to tell you. It doesn't seem right. And the psalmist is confessing that as he looked at what was happening in the world around him and he saw the wicked doing the things they were doing, it bothered him.

[10 : 26] It was offensive. For they have no pangs until death. Their bodies are fat and sleek. By the way, in those days, being fat and sleek was an indication that you were prosperous.

The average person working in an agrarian environment, working on the farm from sunup to sundown, guess what? They didn't carry a lot of extra weight.

And so when you looked at a person who was corpulent, you were thinking, man, that guy's really enjoying the high life. They're not stricken like the rest of mankind.

Therefore, pride is their necklace. Violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes swell out through fatness. Their heart overflows with follies. They speak. They scoff and speak with malice. They set their mouths against heavens and their tongues struts through the earth.

Therefore, his people turn back to them and find no fault in them. And they say, how can God know? And the psalmist, as he was pondering this, he was pretty affected by it.

[11 : 30] It discouraged him. And look at what he says then in verse 16. But when I thought to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task.

What the psalmist is saying here is that here he is trying to kind of process the prosperity of the wicked.

And it just seems hard to get his hands around it. Okay? Now, Scripture encourages us to be content with such things as we have.

How many of you know that passage? How many of you on occasion pray, Lord, help me to be content? Anybody else besides Tim, Kenoyer, pray about being content? I'm just looking. Are there any of you?

There are some of you that may need to add that to your short list, right? Amen. So here is the psalmist looking around and he's struggling because it just doesn't seem fair.

[12 : 29] And, you know, he is struggling with contentment. And he says, man, when I thought how to understand this, it seemed just overwhelming. I can't get my hands around it.

Now, Mark, verse 17, until I went into the sanctuary of God, then I discerned their end.

John MacArthur, wonderful, godly man, has stepped into the presence of the Lord Jesus and he is enjoying his presence in heaven forever. I happen to be listening to a little clip that he was involved in where he was speaking with Larry King.

Now, that's something that some of you who are older may understand. Some of you who are younger are kind of eyes are glazing over and say, who in the world is that? Anyway, he was a guy at a talk show and he had John MacArthur and he had a rabbi and he had an imam and he had all these religious significant individuals on the platform and they were having a Q&A.;

And Larry King asked him, said, talk to me about heaven and hell. And, you know, and John MacArthur, of course, being who he was, made it quite clear. And one of the things that he pointed out was that, let me tell you something.

[13 : 46] You know, for the Christian, the Bible makes it very clear that the supreme benefit of our religion is relationship. And after we die, we go to be with God.

We enjoy his presence forever. Psalm 16:11, in thy presence is the, in thy presence. I messed up here.

Okay. Forget that verse. In thy presence is the fullness of joy and at thy right hand are pleasures evermore. Wait till you get to be 77. Okay.

So anyway. I don't remember why I went to the kitchen. But here's the point. John MacArthur is explaining that we're all going to die.

For the believer, we go into the presence of Christ. For the unbeliever, we go away from the presence of God into eternal suffering and hell.

[14 : 46] Now. And Larry King said, well, that just doesn't seem just. That doesn't seem fair. And he said, oh, John said, none of us want justice.

We want grace. And this morning, as you think about this passage where Job is, he's refuting the flawed, ignorant logic of his shallow friends who are saying, hey, you're having bad things happen because you're a bad guy.

Just say sorry and it'll be okay. No, Job understands that this business of what is going on in his life is not in and of itself an indication of everything that is true about God or about himself.

And going back to Psalm 73, he says, you know, and when I went into the sanctuary, then I understood their end. And so as you look at the overarching substance of Job chapter 21 and 24, I would just explain it in summary this way.

Job looks at the evidence that is available around him and he says, listen, this argument that bad things happen to bad guys and good things happen to good guys.

[16:04] And the bad I'm suffering is just because I've been bad. He says, all you have to do is look around and see the evidence indicates that bad people don't always suffer in this life.

And if you think that's true, the undeniable fact of history and what we see around us makes it very, very clear that that's not the case.

That God always deals with the wicked immediately in this life and they suffer for their consequence or their sin. That's the what. Now we come to an important part and ask the question, why is this passage here?

And I'm not going to ask you this, but when you think about the why, I trust that you have in your mind kind of a short list of Bible answers why things are in the Bible.

Do you understand my point? Thank you. I trust you have a short list of reasons why things are in the Bible. These things are written that you know that Jesus is the Christ and believing in him, you might have eternal life.

[17:17] John chapter 21. These things are written, right, that you might have assurance about your salvation. These things are written that you might have hope.

Romans chapter 15. These things are written that you might look at their example and not do the same dumb things. 1 Corinthians chapter 6, right? It's appropriate for us to remind ourselves that when God puts something in the book, he does it for our sake.

And it's appropriate to say, why is that there? Well, on the face of it, the first thing that we should think of when we say, why is this here, is to be driven by context.

And the context of Job's rebuttal is the flawed argument of his friends that are saying, hey, Job, get real. You're suffering because you're a bad guy.

Just say sorry and it'll be okay. And that's oversimplistic. But my point is, Job responds to their foolish indictment by saying, it's not true that only bad things happen to bad people.

[18:30] Look at bad things happening to good people, me, and look at good things happening to bad people. And he wants his friends to understand that they're missing the point.

Furthermore, this passage exposes flawed logic of inadequate theology. The idea that reward and punishment is undeniable in Scripture.

I mean, the truth is there. Go back to Genesis chapter 2, verse 17. God said to Adam and Eve, if you eat this fruit, what's going to happen? You're going to die. And Genesis chapter 3 makes it clear that sin produces consequence.

And that is a Bible truth that runs throughout the Scriptures. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The idea that you can sin and not have eventual consequences someday is not in the Bible.

Sin produces heartache. One of the things that Isaiah said, Jeremiah said repeatedly, is this, is that the way of the transgressor is hard.

[19:50] Sin produces heartache. Sin produces heartache. But we also need to understand that while God does deal with sin, he doesn't deal with sin in the same time frame that we deal with sin, particularly when it has to do with other people sinning against us.

How many of you understood what I just said? We would like God to deal with the other people pretty quickly. I am pathologically early for most everything in my life.

And I have to admit this. I left quite early. I'm driving here. And I get to a stoplight, one car in front of me. And the person's on their phone.

How many of you understand what I'm saying? I am a profoundly patient individual. I'm blessed. And anyway, the light turns green.

Oh, Lord. Honk! Okay. You see, we would like God to deal with sin pretty quickly, so long as it's other people.

[21:06] And Job wants his friends to understand that their flawed logic of insisting that God always deals with sin immediately is wrong.

The passage also leads us to look for some deeper Bible answers. Why does God not deal with sin as quickly as we'd like him to, at least in the lives of other people, right?

Why? You have a Bible answer, right? Or are you waiting for me? I hope every one of you here have a Bible answer.

I'll give you a couple. And you may add to that on your own initiative. But in Romans chapter 2, it says, Do you despise the kindness and long-suffering of God, not knowing that it leads you to repentance?

Repentance. God is profoundly patient. And he's that way because he wants us to come to repentance. And so when you find yourself being a little sharp and harsh, and, Lord, I really wish you would deal with Bubba because he is a jerk, and you know what?

[22 : 22] No. Learn to pray that God would be as forbearing and patient with that person as he has been with you.

Fair enough? Romans chapter 2 we talked about, but let me have you look at another passage. 2 Peter chapter 3 verse 9.

Let me just read it to you here. It says, Oh, Lord. Why don't you get with it and deal with him?

No, no, no. God is not slow the way you think he's slow. But is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

God left the glory of heaven, the Lord Jesus. To bear the wrath of God against my sin. And he has drawn me from death to life.

[23 : 27] And as I think about that, I am stunned by his long-suffering forbearance in my life. 77 years. There's another reason.

Turn in your Bible to Ecclesiastes chapter 8 verse 11. I'll give you a summary of it, but I want you to look at the passage yourself. In essence, it says this. The judgment of God is not enacted swiftly. Ecclesiastes chapter 8 verse 11. A very important passage. The judgment of God is not enacted swiftly so that the heart of man may be fully displayed in its wickedness.

Summary. Okay. I'll give you an illustration so you can remember this. I have the privilege of being the father of four children and a grandfather to 14. And I remember one particular one of my grandchildren thought that it would be appropriate to go ahead and help, gender specific here, help himself to cookies after he'd been advised not to do that.

Right? And there was a vague suspicion that we had that he would go ahead and do that. We figured him out and we knew what would happen when we left the room. And so we did. But we kept an eye on things.

[24 : 47] Climbed up on the counter. Young boy. Very inventive. Got up on the counter by himself. And if we had jumped in immediately and said, what are you doing on the counter? What did he say? And it was like, well, yeah, trying a little bit of, you know, whatever it is and trying to get up here higher and get a better observation.

No, no, no. We let him not only get his hand in the cookie jar, but have the cookie in his mouth when we stepped out and said, what are you doing? And he advised us that he was not eating a cookie.

Am I right, Judith? It's amazing. It reminds us the heart is deceitful above all things and what?

Desperately wicked. Why did we wait for him to get the cookie in his mouth?

Because if we had interfered early on, he would have advised us that we were premature in our harsh judgment of the darkness of his heart. Ecclesiastes says one of the reasons God is patient is he wants people to bury the axle before he helps them understand just how desperate their condition is.

I want you to understand this morning as you think about the subject that unrepentant, unregenerate men miss the point of how dark their hearts are.

[26 : 15] And God is patient. So that's the why. Let's talk about how. How does this passage fit you as a believer?

For one thing, it encourages you to be careful in hasty judgment about the work of God, particularly in other people's lives.

We see things happen to people. And we sometimes think, yeah, I knew that was going to happen.

They had it coming. That's so offensive to God. Do you realize that? God, God, who is profoundly forbearing and patient, long-suffering, takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, as it says in Ezekiel.

And in fact, I think it was in Proverbs, it says, and when he sees us having an attitude while he's punishing somebody else, he'll stop. I remember dealing with one of my children and discovering that another one of my children was quite pleased with what was going on.

[27 : 35] I stopped what I was doing and invited the other child who was quite pleased to now take the place of the previous suffering child. Why?

Why? God is offended when we do not display the mercy and tenderness of God towards sinners. Second thing that I want you to understand is that as you look at this passage, it's wise for us not to complain and chafe when the Father of glory is putting us through hardship and suffering.

No suffering we endure is ever brought on by our Father's negligence or indifference. You remember when Elijah the prophet was dealing with the prophets of Baal and they're all dancing around and he says, you know, go ahead, make a little more noise because he could be off, you know, on a trip.

He could be napping. Or maybe he's even gone to the bathroom. You know, you need to be loud. Things that happen to me as a believer and to you as a believer are never accidental.

Every moment in our life as a believer is marked by his good intentions and his sovereign control. [28 : 56] I love, I love Hebrews chapter 12 verse 10 in which the author compares this subject of, you know, suffering.

And he says, you know, our fathers dealt with us and disciplined us with good intentions. But the Father in heaven, he deals with us and he brings suffering to our life that, listen to this, that we may be partakers of his holiness.

Does it get any better than that? That we may be partakers of his holiness. I remind you that when these things happen, don't be a brute and don't complain against God as he is dealing with you.

One other point I do before I think of those who are here that may not know Christ. Trust him in the storm. That's a choice. Trust him.

Every one of you here will have your storms. I kind of laugh at Joel Osteen, the idea that it's going to be one. Now, you know, you're going to have storms.

[30 : 06] You are going to have storms. And in the storm, trust him. Here's what Job said in the passage in Job 13. He said, though he slay me, yet will I, I'll trust him.

A passage that I particularly love is over in Mark chapter 4 verse 35 through 41 and kind of summarize it for you this way. Here's Jesus getting into the boat and he tells the disciples, we're going to the other side.

They're rowing away and he's sleeping in the back of the boat and a storm comes up. And they really get nervous. They get just overworked with the storm. And they come back to him and they say, don't you care that we're going to die?

Have you ever been there? It's like, do you know how much I'm suffering? Jesus has already said, you're going to the other side. He'll get you there.

And he knows what he's doing. To you who are here and do not know Christ. The scriptures are clear that those who die rejecting Jesus will spend eternity in hell.

[31 : 29] Far from God. And I would plead with you as the scripture says in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God. He has already provided the sacrifice of his own son for your sin.

And he offers that to you today. How can you reject such a gracious gift and not endure the wrath of God for all eternity?

Be reconciled to God. Let's pray. Father, this morning we are here in one of two conditions. We know Jesus as our Savior.

And we benefit in growing as the Spirit of God makes it clear that you are at work framing and shaping us to be more like the Lord Jesus.

And help us in that to receive with grace and thanksgiving, with faith, the strokes and choices of your heart.

[32 : 53] And for those that are here that do not know Jesus, let today be the day that the Spirit of God convicts them and draws them to the cross.

Amen. Amen. You're dismissed.