



Bad things happen—but why?

A holy question

“Why are these things happening to me?” “I believe, but why am I under attack?” “I prayed—so why did my loved one die?” “Why did God permit me to be abused?” “Why do we suffer, when we’re good?” “I’m desperate—why doesn’t God do something?” *Why?* The question demands cause, reason and purpose. “Why?” appears about 50 times in Job, the Bible’s oldest book. When we ask *why*, we’re in company with people like David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Jesus in his darkest hour—“My God, why have you forsaken me?” So here’s comfort. Your “Why?” questions—they are valid, important, and even holy.

Seeing and guiding

Our desperate “Why?” questions demand cause, reason and purpose. When a terrible thing happens in my life, it would help if I could make sense of it, if I could see the big picture of it—past, present and future. Sometimes, I think I see a piece of the larger scene. Mostly, I do not. I am human. I am not timeless, not all-seeing, not all-knowing. I am not all-wise—I am barely wise at all. But God is! He is mine, and I am his. Because of this, I can cling to God in peace and hope. I cannot see clearly and I cannot guide myself. But like a child with a parent, I can rely on Heaven to do the seeing and the guiding for me. Hebrews 10:23.

Let it be now

Our “Why?” questions are good and holy. Jesus himself, in his darkest hour, asked “Why?” “Why?” comes from the sacred heart of our experience. To one disciple’s perplexity, Jesus gave an immortal answer: “Suffer it to be so now.” Matthew 3:15 (KJV). This is priceless. Throughout our lives there will be things too strange for us to understand. We protest, we object, we complain. But our Lord says, Let it be so now. Do not exhaust yourself raging against it. Do not drive yourself to despair over it. Do not jeopardize your soul over it. Let it fall into my responsibility. There is a larger purpose—and together, you and I will fulfill it.

God has responded

There are 1,189 chapters in the Bible. Only two describe a time that’s trouble-free. Genesis 1 —“In the beginning....” And Genesis 2—“Creation was completed.” Then, abruptly, comes chapter 3—“Now the serpent....” This is our life. Because of wrong choices by created beings, we find we are not on a picnic; we are in a battle. Ultimately, we receive victory, justice and restoration. But along the way, there is challenge, suffering, waiting. Praise God for blessings

we enjoy, while we engage the battle! There is cause, there is reason, there is purpose. We face unknowns. But God has shared a big picture—he has responded to our “Why?”

Passage guaranteed

Imagine yourself as a worker on a cruise liner. You serve on deck 3. After a night of rough seas and unhappy passengers, you call up to the bridge. “Hey Captain,” you say, “I’m not comfortable with what you’re doing. I’m coming up to the bridge. I’m taking your job. You can come down and take mine.” Yes, it’s preposterous. But how often, when we go through rough seas, we feel we see things better than God, could handle things better than God. Our Captain smiles. He places his hand on our shoulder. “I guarantee you safe passage,” he says. “Your assignment is to let me do my job, while you continue your work, relying on me.”

Loving God for himself

More than 400 years ago, there was a king who loved his wife so deeply that his love inspired everything he did. It was a kingdom of glory. But then, his wife became ill. The king fasted, the king prayed, but the queen died. The king changed. He abandoned his connection with God. He became Ivan the Terrible, one of the most cruel tyrants of history. This raises a critical question each of us must answer: Do I love God for God himself—or do I love God solely for the good things he brings me right now? The key for everything is trust and connection. Are you finding God worth loving for *himself*? No matter what!

Whose will be done?

Suppose that, from the day you first believed, you could determine what percentage of losses and sorrows God would miraculously *exempt* you from. Would you choose 10 percent, or 30 percent? Perhaps 60 percent? Would you want 100 percent—and if not, why not? Alternatively, would you trust yourself to your faithful Creator, with the commitment, “Not my will, but Thine be done”? Sooner or later, we must claim full comfort in our Lord. “I’ve said these things to you so that you will have peace in me. In the world you have distress. But be encouraged! I have conquered the world.” John 16:33 (CEB).

Believing from the start

At the exact time I write this, I am completing a meaningful trial that makes me ask “Why?” Two weeks of distraction, expense and anxiety—when God could have resolved the problem easily when I first took it to him in prayer. Know what I mean? So here’s counsel for us. “God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28 (CEB). In relationship with God, my trial is not for evil, it’s for good. I am already starting to see this. But whether I see it or not, it’s true! So if it’s true, I might as well believe it—better near the start of my trial, than at the end.

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A genuine view

Someone might have told you that when you trust God, you are delivered from adversity. This is not a genuine Bible view. Praise God—there are some times when we do receive deliverance *from* adversity! But at all times, we receive deliverance *in* adversity. Job cried out “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.” Job 13:15 (NKJV). Isaiah, discouraged, testified “Yet I leave it all in the Lord’s hand; I will trust God.” Isaiah 49:4 (NLT). John the Baptizer, dying in a dungeon, was the greatest man who ever lived. Luke 7:28. Jesus himself was not delivered *from* the Cross, but *in* the Cross. *In* your adversity, you can trust your mighty Deliverer.

The greater glory

Life takes its toll physically. But spiritually, it can be a different story. “Even if our bodies are breaking down on the outside, the person that we are on the inside is being renewed every day.” 2 Corinthians 4:16 (CEB). This is our *inside miracle*, and the devil cannot stop it. God takes our every loss, trial and sorrow, and reshapes it into something meaningful for our present growth and final joy. “Our temporary minor problems are producing an eternal stockpile of glory for us that is beyond all comparison.” Verse 17. In your struggle, visualize this “stockpile of glory”! Believe it—God is producing something incredible in you, and for you.

Into the sanctuary

An ancient songwriter looked at prevailing evil, and sank into depression. Then, by the Spirit, he entered God’s sanctuary—where suddenly he understood. Psalm 73:17. The sanctuary is our hiding place. It’s where righteousness and peace “kiss each other.” Psalm 85:10. The sanctuary is the heart of God, torn open for us. The sanctuary is our guarantee that in the end, everything works for good. The sanctuary is the Cross of Jesus. There at the Cross, we see ultimate suffering and total relief; extreme sacrifice and perfect victory. Bring your trial now to the Cross of Jesus. Enclosed in God’s sanctuary, you will find everything you need.