

WHY BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO CHRISTIANS

"In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him."

Ecclesiastes 7:14

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all."

Psalm 34:19

- I. Bad things do happen to Christians: wise men will properly prepare for them and respond to them.
 - A. The best of men have negative events in their lives, maybe more than average men e.g. Jacob, Joseph, Naomi, Job, Abigail, David, Esther, Daniel, Jesus, Paul, the Thessalonians.
 - B. God's government of all events should be the foundation for your faith (Amos 3:6; Job 2:10).
 - C. No accidents, Fate, chance events, or coincidences – there are only, always God's providences!
 - D. A trained response to adversity will keep from fretting or rebelling against God (Job 1:20-22).
 - E. Any event in your life was known to Him from eternity, and you should view it in that light.
 - F. But He is also pitiful, so that every difficult aspect of your bad event is fully known by Him.
 - G. God made man upright, very good; we brought the bad things (Gen 1:31; 3:16-20; Eccl 7:29); so if you must blame someone for your misfortune, blame Adam's sin and your own sins.
 - H. His wise government is such that no one person suffers much more than others (I Cor 10:13).
 - I. Bad things include health, businesses, employment, death, accidents, not finding a spouse, difficulty selling property, children's conduct, tickets, robbery, or most anything you can think.
 - J. Adversity is better than prosperity: it will do more for your character and giving glory to God.
 1. The events of God's dealing with Israel prove it, as His dealings in your life also prove!
 2. Adversity draws us closer to Him in true faith, convicts us of holiness, and calls forth trust.
 3. We know this, and when in our right minds, we might ask for adversity for its benefits.
 4. If Solomon was right, the house of mourning is better than the house of feasting (Ec 7:1-6).
 - K. If we reduce causes of bad events to a manageable number, we can prepare and respond better.
 - L. If we faint in the day of adversity, our strength is small (Pr 24:10), but this study is to build it.

- II. BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO CHRISTIANS FOR . . . **THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD.**
 - A. God may bring about evil events in your life fully unrelated to your obedience or disobedience.
 - B. He simply may have chosen you as an opportunity for His glory, and He has the right to do so!
 - C. A man was born blind and Lazarus became ill and died for God's glory (John 9:1-3; 11:1-4).
 - D. A poisonous viper jumped out of a fire and fastened on to Paul for God's glory (Acts 28:1-6).
 - E. How do you know God is not going to turn your circumstances to get Himself greater glory?
 - F. Which is greater? Blessing a man to recover from a cold or terminal cancer? Give Him glory!
 - G. Paul had a thorn in his flesh from Satan, which buffeted him, that could promote God's glory and grace more through its presence than through its absence (II Cor 12:1-10). He rejoiced!
 - H. God gets greater glory from faithfulness during adversity than during prosperity (Job 1:9-11).
 - I. Faithfulness during prosperity is hardly faithfulness at all; it is merely enjoying the blessings!
 - J. You may have been born and/or raised with disadvantages, but you can use these to His glory.
 - K. We give greater worship to God by showing He is more than enough to sustain us in trouble.
 - L. You give Him the greater adoration when He is your Portion over anything else (Ps 73:25-26).
 - M. Of course, His glory also applies to the following three, for in all three God gets greater glory!
 - N. Are you prepared and able to humble yourself for God's glory and rejoice in painful adversity?
 - O. Can you, as Elihu told Job, ascribe horrible events to, "God is greater than man" (Job 33:12)?
 - P. Regardless of what the bad event is, giving greater glory to God is the quickest way to relief.

III. BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO CHRISTIANS FOR . . . **THE TRIAL OF THEIR FAITH.**

- A. God may bring adversity and affliction to test our faithfulness, regardless of general obedience.
- B. God bragged of Job's uprightness, but He took everything He had to test his faith (Job 1:12).
- C. Adversity has positive affects on our lives, so God uses it (Jas 1:2-4; Rom 5:1-5; I Pet 1:6-7).
 - 1. We know we walk closer to the Lord and more consistently when in trouble with adversity.
 - 2. Prosperity does not work well in promoting godliness and faith (Job 30:9; Deut 32:15).
 - 3. We know when delivered from painful adversity, we believe and trust more than before.
 - 4. Consider this aspect of man's nature in reading the volatile history of Israel in Judges.
 - 5. Soldiers are only adequately prepared for combat by intense and difficult training before.
 - 6. The trying of our faith works patience, which leads to Christian perfection. Count it all joy!
 - 7. Based on James 1:2-4 and Romans 5:3-5, you can only get to perfection via afflictions.
- D. Our Lord's faith was immediately tested after His public obedience in baptism (Matthew 4:1).
 - 1. Obviously He was not being chastened for sin or suffering consequences of foolishness.
 - 2. Let us remember that both God and Satan have different reasons to test us after obedience.
 - 3. God wants to see if we truly and sincerely fear and trust Him (Genesis 22:12; James 2:21).
 - 4. Satan wants to see if he can destroy us after making our public profession of faith in Christ.
- E. God may keep visible resources low to build faith in Him (Deut 8:1-6; Prov 30:7-9). Be glad!
- F. He similarly uses inherited circumstances such as race, sex, height, abilities, and opportunities.
- G. Are you able to be thankful for adversity, as was David, for its perfecting purpose (Ps 119:71)?
- H. Consider Abraham's zealous desire to obey a singular and difficult temptation (Gen 22:1-3).
 - 1. His God delivered him from this horrible temptation by providing a ram for the sacrifice.
 - 2. And this event proved to the Lord that Abraham truly feared God and exemplified faith.
- I. The LORD of heaven is not our slot machine to pour forth coins at the pull of prayer's lever!
 - 1. God's sure promises of goodness must be tempered by time and kind (Mark 10:28-30).
 - 2. He taught us specifically to pray in a manner of patient waiting (Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8).
- J. God is able to try our faith with prosperity or the prospect of prosperity (Ps 62:10; Heb 11:26).
- K. And sometimes the prosperity you so desire and enjoy is God's judgment (Pr 1:32; Ps 69:22).
- L. If you question or resent a trial, you beg God to lengthen or toughen it, like Job (Job 36:15-23).
- M. When you have been comforted after a trial of faith, you can then comfort others (II Cor 1:3-5).
 - 1. While this could be a fifth category itself, the comfort from God rather than the tribulations are what produce the ability to comfort others, so it does not fit this study as a category.
 - 2. There is insufficient Bible evidence to put it on a par with the other categories listed here.

IV. BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO CHRISTIANS FOR . . . **THE CHASTENING OF THEIR SINS.**

- A. God judges His people practically for their sins (Proverbs 3:11-12; Heb 12:5-13; 10:30-31).
 - 1. His chastening is stated to be grievous, but it is for our profit. We must understand this.
 - 2. Do not despise it for three reasons: it is by love; it perfects us; and it is far milder than hell.
 - 3. Can you freely admit that chastening gets your attention and brings you back (Ps 119:67)?
 - 4. Chastening is God's affection to deliver from eternal judgment (Ps 94:12-13; I Cor 11:32).
 - 5. Some may view this as the "worst" of the four causes, but it proves God's adopting love!
- B. God's judgment in one area may override obedience in that area (Haggai 1:1-11; 2:15-19).
- C. Righteousness in one area of your life does not sanctify the other areas (Haggai 2:10-14).
- D. When faced with adversity, we should ask God to show us our sins (Job 34:31-32; Josh 7:6-9).
- E. As the text declares, we should soberly consider in the day of our adversity (Isaiah 42:23-25).
- F. Wise men will circumspectly view all areas of their lives to prove them right (Eph 5:15-17).
- G. Wise saints use regular self-examination and prayer for God to examine (Ps 19:12; 139:23-24).
- H. Wise saints ask God to keep them from dominating, presumptuous sins (Ps 19:13; Matt 6:13).
- I. God may grant forgiveness, yet punish you for the offence (II Sam 12:9-13; II Sam 13:1-29).

- J. If you do not seek God's kingdom first, then you should be expecting shortages (Matt 6:33).
- K. The Corinthian church saw many members weak, sick, and even dying for sin (I Cor 11:30).
- L. Ananias and Sapphira were struck down dead in the church for financial lies (Acts 5:1-11).
- M. God may chasten you for the residual lesson it gives to others (Deut 13:11; II Sam 12:14; Acts 5:11; I Tim 5:20), for smiting a scorner will benefit the observing fools (Pr 19:25; 21:11).
- N. The entire Old Testament is a 1500-year drama of Israel's sins and God's chastening of them!

V. **BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO CHRISTIANS FOR . . . CONSEQUENCES OF FOOLISHNESS.**

- A. Your adversity may simply be the result of past or present foolishness in that area of your life.
 - 1. Consider Proverbs 13:15 or any proverb like it, as there are many, many such warnings.
 - 2. The Bible is full of wisdom; if you have failed to use it, then you will likely suffer for it.
 - 3. Natural men can profit from practicing God's wisdom, as there are natural consequences.
 - 4. God's laws have built in blessing for obedience and built in punishment for disobedience.
 - 5. Before blaming God or anyone else, measure yourself by Scripture's objective standard.
 - 6. God does not have to do anything in this matter; He simply lets His given laws punish you.
 - 7. You are foolishly punishing yourself by choosing to run into the teeth of His perfect word.
 - 8. His word sets blessing and cursing before you. Why will you choose cursing over blessing?
 - 9. For example, suretyship will punish you, without God chastening you (Proverbs 22:26-27).
 - 10. You may also sin here, but natural consequences are not the chastening categorized above.
- B. Chastening can bring judgment in other areas; consequences bring trouble in that very area.
 - 1. Marriage out of the Lord can be judged anywhere, and it brings home division (I Kgs 11:4).
 - 2. Poor child training might bring judgment, and it brings family heartache (Prov 29:15,17).
 - 3. Loving pleasure might be judged by God, and it brings you certain poverty (Prov 21:17).
 - 4. Poor preparation for worship will be judged, and it will cause assemblies to be "boring."
 - 5. Extra sleep could bring God's chastening, and it will make you poor (Pr 6:6-11; 24:30-34).
 - 6. These examples could be multiplied indefinitely, for each law of God has repercussions!
- C. Let us also make a subtle division between flagrant sins and a slothful application of wisdom.
 - 1. If you do not diligently apply wisdom in life, you will reap consequences of foolishness.
 - 2. Not reducing your words will damage your reputation proportionately (Proverbs 17:27-28).
 - 3. Neglecting graciousness will cause you to lose honor in the sight of men (Pr 11:16; 22:11).
 - 4. If you marry a hypochondriac man from a hypochondriac family, you will always be nurse.
 - 5. If you do not marry a gracious woman, you will have a related stink to cover (Pr 17:15-16).
- D. Folly by those in authority over you, from parents to rulers, will also affect your circumstances.
 - 1. This is a very simple point – decisions by those in authority affect those under authority.
 - 2. A foolish, lazy, or selfish parent costs children greatly; a wise parent can help them much.
 - 3. A foolish or proud king can get his nation in trouble; a wise king can bring them prosperity.
 - 4. A woman married to a fool (her error or her father's error) will cost her dearly through life.
 - 5. God promised to judge both prophet and people allowing idols of the heart (Ezek 16:6-11).
 - 6. A carnal or slothful pastor will surely cost his hearers their practical salvation (I Tim 4:16).
- E. Poverty and financial failure are often results of slothfulness (Pr 24:30-34) or vanity (Pr 28:19).
 - 1. One error is slothfulness – and to the degree it is allowed, it will bring certain poverty.
 - 2. Another error is vanity – falling for Ponzi schemes or multi-level marketing bring poverty.
 - 3. Of course, there are more errors as well, from foolish suretyship to not giving liberally.
- F. Some sins have long-term consequences, unless God intervenes. Consider education, marriage, child training, sexually transmitted diseases, saving, debt, criminal record, reckless driving, etc.
 - 1. If you marry an ungracious woman from an ungracious family, you will always hurt for it.
 - 2. If you do not save money during your life, you will not have capital for good investments.
 - 3. If you play the fool and commit a legal crime, you will have a criminal record in the future.

4. If you do not acquire a transferable skill, save personal capital, or establish professional contacts, future employment will be much tougher for you than for others obeying wisdom.
 - G. Current obedience and wisdom may be offset by consequences of past disobedience and folly, as the residual effect of the past costs you. God is merciful and can save you (Joel 2:25-27).
 - H. The prodigal did not realize his folly until he felt their consequences (Luke 15:13-16), which were the natural result of a foolish youth leaving the wisdom and care of his father (15:17-18).
 1. You should be slow in delivering fools from their folly (Ps 36:1-2; Pro 20:4; II Thess 3:10).
 2. Such punishment is painful, but it teaches fools the value of wisdom and obeying it.
 3. God did not chasten the prodigal son; He did not need to do so; his folly cost him enough.
 - I. Prosperity itself is not proof of godliness, but godliness with contentment is gain (I Tim 6:5-6).
 - J. Solomon often repeated his appeal to attentively hear his instruction (Pr 1:8; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; etc.).
- VI. Responding to bad things in life is the most important thing you can learn and retain in this study.
- A. Remember, our God is plenty wise enough to combine one or more of these reasons together!
 - B. Never question or charge God foolishly (Job 2:10)! No anger! Be humble and wise in trouble.
 - C. With this information, there is a silver lining in every cloud, no matter which of the four it is!
 - C. Is God fair? He is better than fair, even to Job! You deserve hell – laugh at your light troubles.
 - E. Even when bad things happen, good things outnumber them 10 to 1? 100 to 1? 10,000 to 1?
 - C. **For God's glory**, you should (1) give Him all the glory joyfully at all times, (2) acknowledge His right to your life, while (3) using all reasonable means and prayer to remove the adversity.
 - D. **For trials of faith**, you should (1) understand their value, (2) rejoice in their purpose, (3) be thankful for their effect, (4) learn the lesson quickly, and (5) cheerfully endure their pain.
 - E. **For chastening of sins**, you should (1) pray for God to reveal your faults, (2) examine yourself carefully, (3) confess as soon as you have any conviction, (4) submit to reproof from others, and (5) tell God you have learned the lesson as quickly as possible.
 - F. **For consequences of folly**, you should (1) obey God's word as early and fully as possible, (2) be prudent in all decisions, (3) beg God for mercy for your failures and stubbornness, and (4) use all means God has taught for your recovery.
 - G. Be wise in considering your circumstances; do not fret against the Lord; fear Him (Ec 7:9-18)!
 - H. What songs should you sing in order to encourage yourself in the Lord by faith (I Sam 30:6)?
 1. *God Will Take Care of You* by Civilla D. Martin in 1904 warns against dismay by trouble.
 2. *It Is Well with My Soul* by Horatio G. Spafford in 1873 rose above losing three daughters.
 3. *Farther Along* by W.B. Stevens in 1937 reminds of the future perspective of present pain.

For Further Study:

1. Sermon, "When Things Seem Hopeless," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/when-things-seem-hopeless.pdf>.
2. Sermon, "Hope or Hopelessness," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/hope.pdf>.
3. Sermon, "Is Anything Too Hard for the Lord?" ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/is-anything-too-hard-for-the-lord.pdf>.
4. Sermon, "The Life of Faith," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/life-of-faith.pdf>.
5. Sermon, "Your Thoughts Can Destroy You," ... <http://www.letgodbetruer.com/pdf/your-thoughts-can-destroy-you.pdf>.