

Why Does God Allow Bad Things to Happen?

When the news reports another hurricane, flood, or other natural disaster, a familiar question pops up, one that resurfaces anytime people face tragedy.

Why does God allow bad things to happen?

This is not only a familiar question, it is an old one. Ancient, in fact. It was essentially the first question asked in the Bible. The Book of Job was very likely the first biblical book penned, and the heart of this book centers on the question of why good people suffer.

Job, who likely lived during the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was a righteous man—yet God allowed Satan to take away his children and his great wealth. Job's response?

Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshiped, saying: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will leave this life. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.' "Throughout all this Job did not sin or blame God for anything" (Job 1:20-22).

Satan said Job would lose his integrity and curse God if his health was attacked. So God allowed Job to be struck with nasty boils all over his body. Again Job responded without accusing God.

"Should we accept only good from God and not adversity?" (Job 2:10).

Job's response doesn't mean he was content with the situation. He wanted to know why God judges our actions when He can change things. He asserted his blamelessness. He wanted to know how to appease God's justice.

It's at this point a lot of people would simply write God off. The skeptic says:

- If God is all-powerful, He must not be loving, because although He has the power to stop evil, He doesn't care enough to prevent it.
- If God is loving, He must not be powerful, because as much as He cares and loves those suffering, He is powerless to do anything.

There is no doubt of God's power. Look at the universe around us. Nothing is too great for Him or beyond His scope.

And I have no doubt about His love. My own experience confirms His love and grace.

Job wanted to question God, and God responded. He asked Job a boatload of questions to show how little Job knew.

"Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind. He said: Who is this who obscures my counsel with ignorant words? Get ready to answer me like a man; when I question you, you will inform me. Where were you when I established the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding" (Job 38:1-4).

Job knew so little of the physical world he could see, so how could he understand the moral world he could not see?

In the end, God never directly answered Job's question! Admittedly, we don't like that. We want a full explanation complete with charts and diagrams. But do we really want a God we can explain? Frankly, if we could explain all God does—and doesn't do—He wouldn't be much of a God.

One reason we know for sure bad things happen: we live in a sinful fallen world. We are sinful people—all of us. Bad people do bad things. Evil people inflict evil on others.

God stepped into the world in Jesus to address the problem of a sinful world. Through the death and resurrection, God guaranteed a life to come that will be free from pain, suffering, and evil.

"For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

That answer sounds like a cop-out to some. *It's easy to talk about the by-and-by, about heaven someday, but why doesn't God keep the innocents from suffering now?*

I don't know. But I do know this: I've learned to trust God even when I don't understand. Please don't view that as a blind, naïve faith, but what I know of God—what I've experienced at His hand—gives me confidence to trust Him when I don't understand.

We need to trust God even as a small child must trust his parent when he doesn't understand. That's what Job did.

Wisdom and strength belong to God; counsel and understanding are his" (Job 12:13).

This fallen world is overrun with pain and suffering. I cannot explain it away, but I can trust God. Knowing that the God who is good and trustworthy is with me satisfies my questioning soul.