

Finding God in a Broken World: Experiencing God When You Get a Raw Deal

If people want breakthrough, you have to get clear on God, his love, his holiness, his justice. We have a warped view of God that leads to warped lives.

Have you ever done the honorable thing, and it back fired on you?

Have you ever done all the hard work and the other guy got all the credit?

If you've ever been the one who received a raw deal, if you've ever said to yourself, life is unfair, God, what's up? Then stay with me because, today, God has a word for every single one of us who has gotten a raw deal.

I don't know about you, but there have been times in my life when I didn't think that God was so good. In fact, some of you may have some circumstances where your theology is good, you are reading the scripture, you are sitting under good biblical teaching, and you really know that God is good, but then you look at your circumstances and you may be saying that this doesn't add up.

I'll tell you a quick story.

A young man was walking across a college campus some years ago. He was half praying, half muttering. And he had the strongest feelings of anger towards God that he had ever experienced in his life. He had been a Christian a little over 3 years. He had only months before made the biggest Lordship decision that he had ever made. I mean it was one of those that he knew with all my heart that this was what God had wanted him to do, and every fiber in his emotional and intellectual being wanted to do the opposite. And by faith, he decided he would do it God's way. And he thought that if God's ever going to bless me, it's gotta be now.

As he was walking across the campus, he, irreverently and unwisely, told God he better speak to him very clearly tonight when he got back to my dorm room, or he was checking out of this Christian life forever, and he was dead serious.

Here is some background on this gentleman's story that will help you understand what was going on and how he had gotten to this point.

He had been dating a girl for a little over two years that he was certain would be his wife. She was certain that he would be her husband. She had gone home to meet his family. He had gone home to meet her family. The whole 9 yards. This was a very serious relationship. She was a believer. She was charming, beautiful, talented. He was convinced that God was about to do something significant in his life and as a believer, being sold out to Christ was the only option. It was a real struggle, but he came to that view. Her view was that I know I am part of God's family. I know I am forgiven, and as long as God's plan fits with what I want to do, that sounds good. She was an only child. Her family was very close, and there was a little home with a white picket fence across the street from her mom and dad, and that's where in her mind that they were going to live happily ever after. And he realized that he couldn't go there. He loved her, but he knew that her life was going one way, and his life was going another way. They ended up breaking up. His mind said that it was the right thing to do, but his heart said that this is the dumbest thing that you have ever done in your life. He used to go out on the hill and could see the light on in her dorm room, and he would just cry. He prayed for God to turn it all around,

to change her heart, to make her different, to turn this all around. He said I know you can change it and make it all ok.

On one night in particular, there was a home basketball game, and after home basketball games, for two years, he would come up from the locker room, and she was always at the top of the steps waiting on him. They would go out after the game and get a coke and talk. It had been 3 months since that had happened. He came up the stairs from the locker room, and there she was, and his heart skipped a beat. Yes! God has worked, this is awesome, her heart has turned around. God you have really done something special. God you are so good, this is so wonderful. He said hi to her and he noticed that it wasn't cold at all, but it wasn't like one of those greetings that made you think that she was just there for him. As he was sitting there thinking about how wonderful it was going to be, there was this little awkward moment, one of the other members of the team, another guy who played guard, walked right past him, she had a sheepy smile, said hi, and he put his arm out, and she stuck her arm in his, and they walked out. He was dangerous at that point. He had never been so angry or livid in his life. He walked out of there saying to God, this really stinks. I'm more committed to you than I have ever been, and I get this? I know this guy, he is arrogant, he is proud, and he has mocked my faith in the locker room, and he has made fun of me, and he has made fun of you God. How in the world can you let this happen? He was livid. He said God, if you don't speak to me tonight, if this is the way that it works, I'm checking out.

He went home. He, at this point, was an old enough Christian to know that just going home and opening his bible to a random passage and saying God speak to me would probably not be the way to go, although He had done that very thing before and it had worked. He opened up his bible and just resumed his reading plan where he had been the past couple of days. He read Psalm 70, and that was alright, Psalm 71 that was ok, and then he read Psalm 73. I want you to imagine if you will, where he was emotionally and what he was thinking as he read this scripture.

Follow along with me as we read this scripture, better than that even, think back on this story and think about a time in your life when you felt this same way. There are times in all of our lives where we have thought that we were getting a raw deal. So, as we dive into this scripture, think of the time when you have received the raw deal that bothers you the most. Reading this scripture through that lens, you are going to see how God can take the Holy Spirit and speak to you through His Word to make a real and practical impact in everyday life. The scriptures are full of practical advice for not only a situation like this, but for every situation that you will ever encounter in life. That is one of the purposes of this Bible study. I want to show you how important it is to get into the scriptures and begin to apply the truths in this book to your life. It will change your life like nothing else will.

As we read this scripture, come to it with some of the questions that the man in the story had.

When is the last time you received a raw deal?

When is the last time that someone had betrayed you?

When is the last time that someone got a promotion because they had a special relationship with a boss? Not because they were better at their job than you.

For some of you, you spent your entire life investing your time, effort, and money into your kids and trying to raise them and make them feel loved and important, and they've grown up and moved out and

had some life experience or been taught something that says now that everything that they have experienced and all the trouble they have had is somehow your fault.

For others, you cared and loved for your parents all your life, you cared for them when they were at their sickest, and they just wrote you out of their inheritance like you didn't even exist.

For other people, you were involved in a business relationship, and they did you in.

Think about things like that and the emotions that you have felt in those situations. Then you will approach hearing this Psalm with the same time of emotion that Asaph had when he was writing this Psalm. Asaph was the choir leader for King David. He's a Godly man. He's a worship leader, but he's having a bad day when he wrote this Psalm.

73 Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart (rendered in other translations as pure in heart). (To those that are totally committed, that's the idea that is behind that word. Yeah, that's true, right?)

2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. (my feet had almost slipped; I nearly lost my foothold.)

3 For I was envious at the foolish (or arrogant), when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. (Meaning they have no struggles and their bodies are healthy and strong)

5 They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. 6 Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain (Literally, pride is their necklace); *violence covereth them as a garment.*

7 Their eyes stand out with fatness (from their callous heart comes iniquity): *they have more than heart could wish.* (the evil that they can imagine or come up with has no limits)

8 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.

9 They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. (tongues take possession of the earth) (They think they have it all together. They think they have the world by the tail.)

10 Therefore his people return hither (people turn to them): *and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.* (This is kind of like the life of the rich and the famous. They are cheating people, and doing stuff that's immoral, but people just line up around the street just for the opportunity to get around them.)

11 And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? (The wicked are saying, how does God know what we are doing? Is there even a sovereign that is aware of what is going on? These people have no regard for God.)

12 Behold, these are the ungodly (Take a good look, this is what these wicked people are like), *who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.*

13 Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. 14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. (This is exactly how we feel when we get a raw deal. We think about how pure our relationship is with God, think about all the good things that we have

done, we decide that we are going to try to do it God's way, and we constantly listen to others talk about the pleasures of living according to the standards of the world, and it's killing us to live a pure life. We basically think that all of this is in vain. What is the good? There is no point.)

There is a shift that happens in verse 15. Asaph begins to think a little more calmly. The emotion has subsided, and he begins to shift a little bit out of this frenzy of emotion.

15 If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. (This is very tender idea here. He was a worship leader. People looked to him for guidance. He's a guy that walks with God. He said, if I bail out of the faith, there is going to be an impact like a big rock hitting a pond, and I am going to impact multitudes of people who have placed their faith in God because of what He has done in me. And if I bail out, this isn't just about my personal faith, but this is going to impact them. Not only all of that, but what about all the relationships that I have with them?)

16 When I thought to know this (tried to understand), *it was too painful for me;* (Life is not working, but if I bailout, think of the implications. What do I do? Where do I go?) Verse 17 begins a very important shift where Asaph gets perspective.

17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God (He gets out of his human reasoning, he gets out of his passionate emotions, he gets out of his life isn't fair, life stinks, why do bad things happen to good people mindset, he entered the sanctuary of God and then he says); *then understood I their end.* (He realizes what is going to happen in the future).

18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.

19 How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

20 As a dream when one awaketh; (In other words, the wicked prosper, but it's only a dream, it's only a fantasy, it's only a phantom, it's only short lived) *so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.* (People in this world do some really wicked things, but there is a day of reckoning and there is a day of judgment, and when it comes, God in his justice, pulls the rug out from under people who flaunt evil. He is the great equalizer, and he doesn't put up with it forever. Asaph is getting more perspective. He moves from getting perspective on the wicked who are prospering to now gaining perspective on his own life.)

21 Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. (Literally Asaph was depressed)

22 So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. (He said that I got so hot emotionally that I lost sight of the big picture. I lost sight of who you are. I lost sight of what you've done. I lost sight of the relationship you have with me. I got so mad, so angry, that I lost it.)

23 Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. (You have been a counselor to me, you have helped me, you have sustained me)

24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. (Notice those 3 things. Hold me, guide me, take me. He says I am protected, I am secure, I am loved. He's beginning to get the correct picture. And when he really thinks about it, he asks this rhetorical question.)

25 Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. (Once I really think about it, who is never going to let me down, who is going to be my security, who is taking care of me, who gives me joy no matter what? He says, it's you. Then he admits his humanness.)

26 My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. (This gives us incredible freedom because people come and go, jobs come and go, money will come and go, houses go, and markets come and go, but it says that God will be there forever. Then it goes on to talk about those who mock God)

27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. (So in verse 1, Asaph was talking about how God surely is good to Israel, and then in verse 2 he said, but as for me, he acknowledged that his foot almost slipped, that he almost bailed out of the faith. Now he has come full circle, and he finally realizes what will eventually happen to those people that reject and mock God.)

28 But it is good for me to draw near to God:

Notice here is a choice that Asaph has to make

I have put my trust in the Lord God (I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge, the place that I run) (Then he says not only that, but I'm trusting that since God is good, even though my circumstances aren't, that He's in total control, that means He allowed it. And since He's faithful, He's going to take even the worst of my circumstances, turn it around for good, and someday, notice that last line), *that I may declare all thy works.* (We will tell of His deeds). (God is going to work it in such a way, that you will have the opportunity that you can tell of his deeds. When you get a raw deal, you will be crushed, angry, feel like your world has been turned upside, but I have news for you, there will come a time where you will gain perspective and be able to see that you had short-term pain for a long-term gain.

On the white board of your mind, think with me for a minute. There is a time that you got a raw deal. What was it? Let it come to the surface, so God can help you deal with it. We are going to walk through 4 life principles or lessons from this scripture that will help you learn how to deal with the raw deal that you appear to have.

1. If you want to overcome the raw deal in your life, and that's God's will. Here's the first thing that you need to do. Pour out your heart. Face it. Share it. Get it out on the table. Tell God about it. I don't know about you, but I find this so encouraging. Even Godly people struggle with doubts and confusion when God's truth and their experience don't mesh. It's a fallen world. If you haven't gotten it yet, life is not fair. Until Jesus comes back, it's not going to be fair.

Do you know what that means? That means that bad things happen to good people, and the converse, good things happen to bad people. And when that happens, don't stuff it, don't repress it. What's Asaph show us? Take it to God. It's not ungodly. It's ok to be mad at God. Make sure to do this reverently. You be honest, you share it, and you get it out on the table, and let the full vent of your emotions say, God I am upset, this stinks, this is raw, this is terrible. And if you never get it there to God, you will put it down inside, and it will come out eventually, but in very unhealthy ways.

What did Job do? I mean this is Job's whole life. Job does what's right. He encounters negative after negative after negative. So, he does more of what is right. Negative, negative, negative. Job finally says, God, what's the deal? I'm up to here with this. When God finally reproves Job does He ever reprove him for being angry and sharing his heart? The answer is no. He only reproves him for his arrogance of defending himself.

It is so important to pour out your heart, get it out and share it with God. In verses 2-14, we have one of the most Godly men in all of Israel telling it like it is to God, venting his emotions with at least a significant amount of reverence, but he puts it out there. Have you ever done that or are you holding it in? Do you think it's more Godly to hold it in? Now, by the way, don't go pour it out to everybody else. Pour it out to God. Tell Him. Let Him be your counselor. That's principle number 1 if you want to experience God in the middle of your raw deal.

2. Life lesson or principle number 2 is to consider your choices carefully. When you get angry, when people do you in, I don't know about you, but injustice is something that drives most people absolutely crazy, but it especially bothers me when it is happening to me. I am tempted to do very stupid things when I get a raw deal. To say things and to act in ways that will really, really be harmful to me and to others. Asaph realized that his quitting would have done a lot of damage.

Consider your choices carefully. When we are tempted to throw in the towel, we must consider the impact that it will have on others. When you get a raw deal, you can react and you can really burn some bridges and hurt a lot of people.

(Include the part about our faith getting people to Jesus)

3. First step is to pour out your heart, second step is to really think through your response, the third step is get the big picture. In verse 17 it says, "until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end." He worshipped. He got an eternal perspective. When see life through an eternal perspective, we really begin to understand what is important and what is not. That is what happens when we meet with God. See Asaph's whole world turned around because he got into the presence of the Lord and asked him to speak to him. Guess what, God will do the same thing if you ask him to. You have to be committed to seeking Him in prayer and in searching and reading the scriptures. That is how he speaks.

In verse 17, Asaph gets eternal perspective. In verses 18-20, he starts to realize that in the end the wicked really don't prosper. In verses 21-22, he says wait, I was thinking irrationally and emotionally, and I was in self-pity. Then he looks back and gets the big picture and he says, who have I in heaven but you? And besides you, I don't desire anything else. You are my strength, you are my portion, you have been faithful, you are my only real source of joy, you are the only one that I could ever count on. You are eternal. You are good, and you are sovereign.

Here is the real question. How do you get that? How do you get that big picture with the eternal perspective instead of getting on your emotional radar? Let's talk about 3 ways for us to get God's perspective.

- Focus on God's character. Read through the Psalms. Pray through the 10 commandments and ask yourself what attribute of God does each commandment reflect? His justice, His goodness, His holiness, etc. The three attributes that you have to focus on is God is good, God is sovereign, and God is faithful. What you are experiencing did not catch God off guard. He's not sitting up there saying, "Oh my gosh, look what is happening to poor little Adam, did anybody know this was going to happen, Oh my gosh, she ran out, he ran off, they cheated so and so, God didn't get surprised. He is sovereign, He is in control. That means not only does he know about it, but He will turn around and use it for good if you don't bail out of His plan. He's good. He has your best interests in mind. People can try to do negative things to you, they can try to hurt you. He's bigger than they are. He's more powerful than they are, and He's faithful. Every promise He has ever made to you, He's going to come through. Is it going to be in your timing? Probably not, and in the process as you struggle with it, He will probably make you a whole lot more like Christ.
 - Get into the Bible. Scripture will give you perspective. Joseph is the perfect example. He does everything right as a young man and gets sold into slavery. He does everything right at his master's house and gets falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and winds up in prison. He's in prison and does what's right and two people forget him. Why? Because God had a bigger plan. For 12-15 years, Joseph does what is right and his circumstances go bad, bad, worse, and really bad. There was a little phrase in that entire passage and it says it after every bad thing that happens to Joseph. It says, and the Lord was with Joseph. And the Lord is with you. And when you focus on scripture, you get perspective. So by the end of his life, Joseph can see through the eternal lens and his brothers are shaking in their boots. Joseph crosses his arms and he weeps and says, guys you still don't get it, what you meant for evil, God meant for good. You did it for the wrong reason, but God had a plan. God has a Joseph plan for you. Don't bail out. You want the big picture? Focus on God's attributes, focus on scripture.
 - 3 get around God's people. You can get wisdom and perspective from other people who love the Lord.
4. So, if you are struggling with a raw deal, and you want God to really help you, 1. Pour out your heart. 2. Think carefully about the choices you make, it's dangerous ground. 3. Get the eternal perspective. 4. Reaffirm your relationship with God. Ultimately, God's presence, is your only sure source of security and joy, both now and forever. There are a lot of good things in all of our lives, but none of those things have the power to be consistent and come through for us on a day in and day out basis. The moment we begin to trust in them, they become an idol. We must reaffirm our relationship with God, turn the raw deal over to God. Realize what Asaph said about wicked people in verse 27, you know what, God is big, justice will happen, they will get the due. But as for you, let the nearness of God be your good. Make cultivating a relationship with him, your good. Make a choice. Asaph said I have made the Lord my refuge. Make a

choice to turn over your raw deal to God. And then say, God I want you to work it for good. I'll stay in the game plan and I want to walk with you. The day will come that you will tell of the Lord's deeds. You will say that this terrible thing happened in my life, but what a wonderful thing that God did through it.