Why do Bad Things happen to Good People?

Habakkuk 1:2-3
O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.

A Simple Question
It is one of those lingering questions that has long haunted the conscience of good, righteous, honest people.

- Why?
- Why is it that bad things happen to good people?
- Why is it that the righteous seem to struggle
  - when it seems as if the wicked prosper.
- Sometimes it feels like life is more difficult
  - when you are trying to live right.
- When, in the midst of trying to do the right thing,
  - it seems as if you meet nothing but resistance,
  - everything is difficult,
  - and nothing seems to come easy.

David observed such a reality and was provoked to anger and jealousy.
- He went so far, in the 73rd Psalm, as to envy the ungodly.
- The Psalm says:
  - Psalm 73:3 For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
- David said, it just didn’t seem right.
  - It just didn’t seem fair!
- Everything was going well with the ungodly.
  - They were blessed with material wealth,
  - everything seemed to come easy to them,
  - they had peace and prosperity in their homes
    - while the righteous lived in the midst of a constant struggle.
- He said, I find myself almost envious of the peace and prosperity that they have in their lives.

Solomon said: Ecclesiastes 7:15 All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.
- The preacher lamented the fact that a righteous man dies while he has still much to offer;
  - but it seems as if the wicked man survives to carry on in his wickedness.
Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

- Who hasn’t felt that way?
  - The family that can’t seem to have a child
    - cringes at every news story of abuse and tragedy.
  - They know, in their hearts that they could love a child
    - yet they can’t seem to have one,
  - while others, who don’t even seem to have an ounce of love for their children
    - are abundantly blessed with offspring.

We have been told to live the good life.
- We’ve been told to trust God.
  - And, we believe that we are blessed by living right,
    - but sometimes it seems as if the circumstances of our lives
      - deny the truthfulness of such a claim.
- Life is full of frustrating moments
  - when, in the midst of doing good, evil overtakes us.
- When we are giving freely of ourselves so that another is blessed,
  - and a thief sneaks into our lives
    - and robs us of our health,
    - our worldly goods
    - and all of our prosperity!
- It makes you want to throw your hands in the air and cry out, Why?
  - Why me?
  - Why here?
  - Why now?
    - What in the world have I done to deserve such a thing?

Jeremiah said, Jeremiah 12:1 Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?
- He said, Lord I can’t complain too much about the way you’ve treated me,
  - but I see something in this life that I just don’t understand.
- Why do the wicked prosper?
  - Why is it that those that cheat and deal treacherously with others
    - always seem to be happy and carefree?
- It just doesn’t add up.
  - It is a perplexing mystery.
- God cannot be indifferent to sin,
  - he cannot ignore the wickedness of nations
  - or the transgressions of individuals,
    - but it seems, at times, as if the righteous are cast down
    - while the wicked are exalted.

This was the emotional struggle that overwhelmed the prophet Habakkuk
- as he lifted his voice to heaven and joined it with countless others
  - as he cried out:
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The Pentecostals of Lake City

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Habakkuk 1:2-3 O Lord, how long will I cry, and you will not hear?
I even cry out concerning the violence in my life, the enemy that would destroy me
and yet you haven’t even made one move to save me.
Why dost thou shew me iniquity?
I’m a good man, I’m a prophet of the Lord, I live my life in the fear and respect of God... Why?
Why do you cause me be overcome with trouble?
I look around and destruction and violence are before me
and strife and contention are continually with me.
Why, God?

A Simple Answer

Although it is an emotionally loaded question,

- At first glance, there is a simple answer to the question.
  - Bad things happen to all people.
    - Not just the good and not just the bad.
  - All people experience bad things in their lives.
- We can quickly underscore it by reading just a few passages of scripture:

  Ecclesiastes 9:2 All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

  Ecclesiastes 9:11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

  Matthew 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

It may seem, at times, as if justice is out of balance.

- It may seem as the wicked prosper while the righteous struggle, but that’s not the truth.
  - God deals with all men the same.
- The bad things in this life are not reserved for just those that do evil deeds.
  - Nor is all of the good in life reserved for those that do good things.
- It rains on the just and the unjust alike.
  - Good things happen to good people
    - just the same as bad things happen to bad people
    - but the opposite is also true, time and chance happens to every man!
• All things come alike to all men.
  o The circumstances of life are without respect of persons.
  ▪ God doesn’t reserve cancer for the terrible
  ▪ and financial blessing for the good.
• Every man is subject to the ups and the downs,
  o the highs and the lows,
  ▪ all of the nuances of life.
• The sun rises on the evil and the good.
  o The explicit statement of scripture is that all things happen to all men.

The Benefits Righteousness
What then are the benefits of serving God?
• This really seems to be the question that lies at the heart of Habakkuk’s cry.
  o If righteousness doesn’t hold back the hand of evil,
  ▪ if the good man is subject to the same terror of night that the bad man faces
  ▪ then, pray tell, what is the advantage of walking with the Lord?
• To answer that question you need only to turn to the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 37:23 where we learn that the footsteps of a good man are ordered by God.
• This is where the real benefit of serving God lies.
  o God ordains everything in your life.
• Time and chance may happen to every man
  o but you aren’t at the mercy of every whim of circumstance.
  ▪ God is your provider.

Does that mean that bad will not happen to you? No!
• But what it does mean is that before you encounter evil in your life,
  o before bad situations overwhelm you,
  ▪ God strengthens and prepares you for the journey.
• Everything in your life happens within the realm of God’s providence.
  o He’s no respecter of persons,
  ▪ he doesn’t hold back the bad that may darken your days
  ▪ but he does make provision for you in the midst of the storm!

1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

You are going to face some trouble in your life because these things are common to man.
• Circumstances are going to rise up that are going to tempt you,

Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?
o just like they tempted David,
  ▪ to envy the wicked,
  ▪ to toss in the towel
  ▪ to simply give up on serving God.

• Trouble will be your companion in life,
  o but God has promised that he will not suffer you to be tempted above
    what you are able to bear.

• He doesn’t pull any punches,
  o he doesn’t hold back the storms
  o BUT He has already made a way of escape.
    ▪ He has already made a way that you can bear it!

That’s the difference between the righteous and the wicked!

• The righteous may not face any less trouble than the wicked.
  o Both the righteous man and the wicked man are subject to the words
    of Job
    ▪ who declared that our days will be short and full of trouble.

• But the difference is that the righteous man doesn’t face the trial alone.
  o He doesn’t walk through the valley all by himself.
    ▪ He has a strong arm to lean upon in the fury of the storm.
    ▪ He has an ever present help in times of trouble and despair,
      • a certain strength that comes from the presence of the
        Lord,
      • a peace that passes all understanding,
      • the confidence of knowing that he belongs to the Lord –
        o I am His and He is mine!

David said, in Psalm 142:3 *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou
knewest my path...*

• When I was overwhelmed, you knew right where I was!
  o When I didn’t know where to turn,
  o when it seemed as if tragedy would absolutely overwhelm my soul,
    ▪ there you were, right beside me.

• You become my strength when I was weak,
  o my confidence when my faith was almost gone,
  o my hope when everything seemed hopeless.

• That’s the benefit of walking with God.

God doesn’t spare you from the trials and tragedies of this life,

• he doesn’t shelter you in the constant protection of the harbor.
  o He deals with all men equally.
  o He deals with every man the same.

• We all encounter both sunshine and rain,
  o we all know both peace and trouble,
  o we all experience joy and sorrow,
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The Pentecostals of Lake City

Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

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and go through times of happiness and pain.

• But the righteous face those times,
  o both the good and the bad,
  o with the knowledge that God sustains them.
    ▪ HE watches over them!

Blessing In The Storm

Not only that, but God uses the troubling times to the benefit of the believer.

• He who controls the wind, uses the storm to strengthen us.
  o He who tells the sun when to rise and the darkness when to come,
    ▪ uses the dark valleys of our lives
    ▪ to cause us to become strengthened in the Lord.

• Here’s where the real benefits of serving God begin to show up.
  o Trying times impoverish the wicked
    ▪ while they strengthen the righteous.
  o The evil man who has no strength beyond his own,
    ▪ he relies upon no higher power,
      ▪ soon exhausts his resources battling the trials and tragedies of life when they overcome him.
  o While the good man, whose strength is in the Lord,
    ▪ not only find supplemental strength in the midst of the battle
      ▪ but he also finds himself growing in his faith!

James 1:2-4
2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;
3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.
4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

There’s something about the trials of this life that establishes the difference between walking with God and walking without God.

• The trouble destroys the wicked man,
  o tragedies utterly devastate him,
    ▪ they siphon away all of his strength
    ▪ and all of his life
    ▪ and all of his living.

• But the righteous man, he is like a tree planted by the waters!
  o When trouble comes, he stands the test and emerges stronger,
    ▪ when trial and tragedy overwhelm him,
    ▪ when he enters the dry barren valley,
      ▪ he draws from those cool refreshing streams of righteousness and godliness
      ▪ and they sustain him until the rain falls again!

The bad times cause us to grow in the lord,
• the trial of our faith works within us to perfect us in our walk with God.
  o That’s the simple answer.
• That’s why bad things happen to good people,
  o because bad things happen to all people.
• Our assurance in that truth
  o is that God takes that which was meant to destroy us
  o and he turns it into the very thing that strengthens us.
• You can rest assured that, in walking with God,
  o he has your best interest at heart
    • and, no matter what you encounter in this life,
    • he is going to take care of you!
• Bad things will happen to you because they happen to everyone.
  o But, even when bad things happen God will sustain you!
    • That’s the simple answer.

The Better Answer
If we stopped right there, our faith could be strengthened and we would be reaffirmed in the fact that we can trust God no matter what happens in our life.
• But the complex issues behind the question really remain unanswered.
  o There is still that nagging question in the heart that wonders: Why?
    • Why doesn’t God hold back tragedies from happening in the lives of believers?
    • Why doesn’t God protect us from the storms.
  o I understand that adversity causes us to grow, but sometimes it seems as if the circumstances of life are a little more harsh than necessary
    • We all need to grow, but when doctor says cancer it leaves your faith reeling just a bit...
• There is a better answer, tonight, that really addresses the more complex question.
  o That answer lies in our understanding of the very nature of God.
• This is the key to it all: God is no respecter of persons.
  o He deals with all men equally.
    • Before you dismiss the simplicity of that notion, hear me out.

Acts 10:34-35 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

God doesn’t esteem one man above another.
• He deals with all of us the same!
  o That’s why all things happen to all men.
  o That’s why it rains on the just and the unjust alike.
  o That’s why the sun rises on the good man and the bad man at the same time.
    • Because God is no respecter of persons!
• Regardless of position, status, name or history,
  o God deals with all of us in the same way.
• God is absolutely and perfectly impartial.
  o God doesn’t measure the good or bad in a man’s life before dealing
    with him,
    ▪ instead, he deals with all men equally.

Now here’s the true wonder of it all!
• The lynchpin of the whole discussion is found in Romans 10:12-13:

  Romans 10:12-13
  12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Let me tell you why bad things happen to good people:
• Because good things happen to bad people!
• Because God is impartial in all of his dealings,
  o because God deals with all men equally,
  ▪ he can then offer salvation to whosoever will!
• The same Lord over all, who is impartial to all, is rich in mercy to all that call upon him.
  o Listen, my very hope of salvation rests upon the impartiality of God!
  o David said it this way:

  Psalm 130:3-4
  3 If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? 4 But there is forgiveness with thee, ..., that thou mayest be feared.

If God measured iniquities,
• if God dealt with men on the basis of their worthiness,
  o if God measured the life of a man
  o to see if he deserved to be treated good or bad,
    ▪ none of us could stand before him!
• But, thank God, he doesn’t!
  o Thank God that he is impartial in all of his dealings with men!

If God held back the trials and tragedies of life
• on the basis of our righteousness
  o then he would have to hold back redemption
    ▪ on the basis of our wickedness.
• If God kept the storms of this life from ever overshadowing our days
  o on the basis of the fact that we are trying to live right,
• then he would have to reject our plea for forgiveness
Why do bad things happen to good people? Because good things happen to bad people!

Close:
If God kept a tally of sins, none could stand before him but, thankfully, he doesn’t.
  - God is full of forgiveness because God is full of impartiality!
    - Because He is no respecter of persons, we can be assured that when we call on his name he will hear our cry!
      - He hears the cry of every man with equal passion.
      - He judges all men equally.
  - He doesn’t weigh your good and your bad at the foot of the cross to determine if you deserve salvation or not.
    - He weighs the cross against every man’s life and the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.
      - Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

This is the heart of the gospel!
  - God deals justly with all men.
    - Sinners are saved by grace because God is no respecter of persons.
      - You can rejoice in trials,
      - you can joy in tribulation
      - because, when bad things happen to good people,
        - it should remind you that God is faithful to deal with every man in the same manner.
  - It is the hope of my salvation:
    - He will save anyone who turns their heart towards him, even me and even you!

Tonight, no matter who you are and no matter what you’ve done, I must tell you that God doesn’t measure your worthiness before forgiving your sins.
  - He is no more partial when he dispenses his mercy than he is when he pours out the rain.
  - The mercy of God is to whosoever will!
  - Every man, every individual with breath in their body,
    - can experience the forgiveness of God on the basis of the fact that good things DO happen to folks who don’t deserve them!
  - Let me encourage you this evening to call upon the name of the Lord!
    - Let me encourage you to let mercy work in your life!
  - He is still the impartial judge that he always has been and there is still a place of mercy for you at the foot of the cross!
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