

WHERE'S GOD WHEN BAD THINGS ARE HAPPENING?

Has there been a time when you questioned God? Is this a time right now that you are questioning God?

Maybe you have found or are finding yourself in a trial you never *dreamed* would happen to you.

(insert trial of Bill and Jolande and family; our dtr. In law Christine and our son in spring '06)

When you watch the news or look at what's going on around you in your neighborhood/your city, do you wonder, Where is God? If He is God and in charge of this universe, why does He and is He allow/allowing the world to continue on this course of self-destruction? Why doesn't He put an end to all the cruel and bizarre things happening in our society? Or to us right now?

You probably know about something that has happened to someone you know that seemed so unjust, so evil that you began to or did doubt God. In the secret thoughts or places of your mind, have you wondered how God could allow such things to happen to those who belong to Him?

There are traumatic personal things that occur. Someone who was raped and heard it told that in similar situations people who had called on God were delivered. So in the darkness of her fear she, too, cried out to God. In a trembling voice she commanded the man to stop in the name of Jesus. He didn't. Why didn't God answer her cry and deliver her? Have you had this or a similar incident happen to you or someone close to you?

Where was God?

A 20 yr. old girl, a Christian with a spotless reputation, was found brutally murdered in her bedroom.

Where was God?

Hitler exterminated God's chosen people--- men, women and children--- in gas chambers and ovens.

Where was God? Where is God when bad things happen?

These are the type of questions that have troubled the heart of man throughout history, or maybe they trouble you. There are a couple of men in the Bible that struggled with

these issues, ones that you and I and many others have struggled with or do struggle with. They are Habakkuk and Job. The Lord did not ignore their questions but He has preserved them in the Scriptures for us. We do not have to feel alone in our journey on the pathway of this life. We are in good company. Let's pray as we look into the Word of God for His responses to these kinds of concerns. What's His take on this kind of stuff?

Holy Spirit, would you guide us into truth? We cannot understand and discern spiritual truths apart from Your work in our lives. We ask You Lord to give us a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the true knowledge of You. (Eph. 1:17)

We know that You will answer because we have asked according to Your will.
(1Jn. 5:14, 15).

Ps. 119:18 says, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy Law." Lord, we confess to You that we are unable to hear and discern truth apart from Your enabling us to do so. Please enlighten the eyes of our hearts so that we may truly know what You long to show us. We thank You that You will do that. In Jesus' Name.

Read Job 1:7-22

V10... Have You not put a hedge about him and his house and all that he has on every side?

****Protection and blessing are prominent for the man of God.****

V12... the Lord established the boundaries of affliction and trial for His greater purpose.

V21... "And said, Naked (without possessions) came I (into this world) from my mother's womb, and naked (without possessions) shall I depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed (praised and magnified in worship) be the name of the Lord!

(note that with Jason, the Lord spared his life. With Joanna, it would appear that she is fighting for her life... we just do not know the outcome yet for her or anyone else with a life threatening illness, but God does).

Matt. 5:45b says, "For He makes His sun rise on the wicked and on the good, and makes the rain fall upon the upright and the wrongdoers (alike)." Or--- the rain falls on the just and the unjust.

Job's take on his situation and in response to his wife's nay saying is 2:10b "... Shall we accept (only) good at the hand of God and shall we not accept (also) misfortune and what is of a bad nature? In (spite of) all this, Job did not sin with his lips."

V22. In all this Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly."

Then when we read Job 3 we see that as Job is becoming worn down in his trial and suffering, at a point of great grief and great pain, the things deep down in his heart start to surface. He begins to question if God is so smart and sovereign as he thought He was.

He wonders why he is even alive and why he has to suffer this fiery ordeal. In v. 11 he cries out to God, “Why was I not stillborn? Why did I not give up the ghost when my mother bore me?”

(What could possibly be the purpose in my life? If I just give up and end it all now it would be much better for me. What’s the use? Woe is me!!)

This type of thinking or mindset can lead to thoughts of suicide or suicide itself. Suicide can be quick or it can be a slow death. E.g. Drugs, alcohol, smoking, destructive patterns... they’ll all kill you eventually. What was the traumatic event(s) in your life that caused the root of the pain that you continue to carry and nurture either knowingly or unknowingly? What drives you to do what you do? Trying to mask or numb the pain by slowly doing away with yourself?

Is unforgiveness toward the one who caused you the pain still eating you up, literally? Your question to God...’where **were** You when this was happening to me?’...

3:25, 26--- “For the thing which I greatly fear comes upon me and that of which I am afraid befalls me. I was not or am not at ease, nor had I or have I rest, nor was I or am I quiet, yet trouble came and still comes upon me.”
What’s your greatest fear? Is it the –C—word? Is it losing a child in death? (to cancer, or any other tragedy)?

Where is God when bad things happen?

Habakkuk 1:2-3a and 13b says: “How long, O Lord, will I call for help,
And You will not hear?
I cry out to Thee, ‘Violence!’
Yet You do not save.
Why do You make me see iniquity,
And cause me to look on wickedness?
Why do You look with favor
On those who deal treacherously?
Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up
Those more righteous than they?”

Where is God when bad things happen?

GOD IS SOVEREIGN. HE'S THERE. HE HAS NOT LEFT HIS THRONE!

When God doesn't seem to hear your cries or answer your prayers, you need to remember five things or principles. If we can get a grip on them, try to understand them and hide them in our heart, we will find they are truths that will hold us in times of darkness, in times of trial and testing.

1. **God is in control. He rules over all. He's in charge of history.**
2. **All history centers or pivots on 2 groups of people: Israel and the Church.**
3. **Whether or not we see it or understand it, there is a purpose in what God is doing.**
4. **Our times are in His Hands.**
5. **Fear and doubt are conquered by a faith that rejoices.**

In Hab. 3:17-19 it says, "Though the fig tree should not blossom,
And there be no fruit on the vines,
Though the yield of the olive should fail, and the fields produce no food,
Though the flock should be cut off from the fold,
And there be no cattle in the stalls,
Yet I will exult in the Lord,
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.
The Lord God is my strength,
And He has made my feet like hinds' feet,
And makes me walk on my high places."

In all the Word of God there is no greater declaration of faith than the one Habakkuk makes.

He asked God hard questions. The Lord was not put off by them. When God answered, Habakkuk submitted to Him in faith.

What could enable a man or a woman of God (you & I) to make such a pledge of allegiance? It is the understanding of **Who God is** and the realization that **He is sovereign**--- that He accomplishes His plan, that nothing keeps Him from achieving His purpose.

In Hab. 1:5 it says, "Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder!
Because I am doing something in your days---you would not believe if you were told."

Even though Habakkuk hadn't seen it yet, God was doing something. He was raising up a wicked and heathen nation that He would **eventually** use for His eternal purpose. He knew the horror, the strife, the injustice and the violence that existed. Though Habakkuk would not likely understand it at the time, (just like you or I may not understand what we went through or are going through), the Lord was carrying out His purposes for the

nations of the world. He is still in charge of history and He still rules over the nations.

We all need a greater understanding of the Sovereignty of God. Habakkuk seemed to have gotten a grasp on that. In 3:17-19 he used the name “Lord God” to describe God. When you combine ADONAI YAHWEH (Hebrew) it can be translated as “Sovereign Lord”.

In Isaiah 14:24 and 27 it says, “The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, ‘Surely, as I have thought and planned, so shall it come to pass, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand

—

For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who can annul it? And His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?’”.

God is in control. He rules over the nations. He’s in charge of history.

Let’s take a look at King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:17b). He was given a dream from God “In order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes, and sets it over the lowliest of men.”

The Lord spoke very clearly to Nebuchadnezzar not only through a dream but through a very blunt interpretation. But Nebby didn’t “get it”. So a year later, old Nebby is strutting about his royal palace in Babylon. And he’s bragging about himself. (Dan. 4:29-30) “Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?”

Attitude: ‘I don’t need God. I’ll do it myself and I will get the recognition!’

Whether it’s local or television “evangelists”, “miracle workers” or whoever it is, if that person(s) is building their own kingdom in the name of God, too often many people get hurt in the body of Christ. Their eyes are on the man rather than on the Lord but they may say or think, ‘well, if God is so sovereign why does He let these people away with this?’. Rest assured, the pride of man will eventually be reckoned with in the Lord’s way and in His timing.

Nebby isn’t much different from other men/women is he? We think we are the captains of our fate and that we determine our destiny. We tend to forget that every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights.

God is in control of history; it’s His Story!! And He is in control of your story. We just need to come into agreement with that!!

After the Lord humbled Nebuchadnezzar by letting him lose his mind, He brought the king back to his senses. (Now Who's boss? Like a kid would say, 'you're not the boss of me'... oh yeah?!)

After he removed himself from the throne of his life and put the Lord back in His rightful place then Neb. Could say about God: "For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His Hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?' "(Dan.4:34b-35).

The Lord is letting us know that He rules over all that is in heaven and on earth. This includes the cherubim, the seraphim, and the good angels, but He also rules over every demon and over the prince of the power of the air, Satan himself!

This means that neither Satan nor his demons can ever do anything to you apart from God's permission.

Why? The Lord has a greater purpose for your good and for the greater good as it unfolds His sovereign plan. You are not your own. You were bought with a price.

Remember when Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him? It was at this time that Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:31, 32).

Can we see from this the sovereignty of God over Satan? Satan had to get God's permission to sift Peter!

How does this truth affect your life/my life? Satan can never do anything to you or to me without God's permission. 1Cor. 10:13 says that whatever comes into your life will never be more than you can bear!

That may be illness (chronic, acute, life threatening), financial difficulties, marriage and relationship problems etc... What is the trial right now that seems to have you at the place where you don't think you can take another minute or day of? That you can bear it no longer? In our faith walk with the Lord our life can be like an elastic band. Just when we think it's stretched as far as it can go, the Lord stretches us just a little bit more. THEN at the absolute breaking point, He really steps in and our miracle occurs. Circumstances may change or we become changed. My friend, you may be on that very brink of a miracle in your life. Don't give up on yourself and certainly not on the Lord!

That's how you and I can be more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ our Lord in every circumstance of life (Rom. 8:35-39).

Since God does according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth, then no one can do anything to you without God's permission. This truth means that no human being can overpower or surprise God. This truth also means you can rejoice in God no matter what.

"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1Thess.5:18).

You want to walk in the will of God? You ask Him what is Your will for me? There's your answer. Now just do it!!

Thank You Jesus that in the midst of this illness you have a plan for me/ for _____ . Please help me to work with You in Your plan and not against You. Thank You that You love me and You love _____ so much that you do not want to see me or us stay the same. Thank You for Your love and I choose to trust You to work out all the details.

I don't understand what You're doing and I'd really like to know. In fact it really makes me mad that You have not informed me. In fact Lord, I guess I'm mad because You didn't consult me about this trial. You just sprung it on me! Not fair!! But I will surrender to Your sovereign will and plan. Help me in my unbelief! I thank You that You will not give me more than I can bear and that You are really here in spite of what I see or understand. Thanks Lord.

Because God is sovereign, He can promise that all things work together for good for those who love Him, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknows, He predestines to become conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28, 29)".

Because God is sovereign, even when people intend to do evil against you, God will work it out for your good. He is the Redeemer of the difficulties, trials, and tragedies of life. No matter what happens, because God is sovereign, you and I can live above it all with hinds' feet on high places--- if you are His child.

Have you ever been faced with questions like:

If God is sovereign, are men still responsible for what they do?

Why does a sovereign God allow men to do evil?

Why does God allow men to suffer because of the unrighteousness of others?

Does a sovereign God hold men accountable for the evil they do, even though God uses their evil to accomplish His purpose? YES.

We have to remember that there is a purpose in what God is doing, whether we see it or not. Nothing is going to thwart God's plan for executing that purpose.

Although God causes all things to work together for good for His children, He still holds us accountable for our behavior. The sovereignty of God never lets us off the hook. God still holds us responsible for our actions. It is important for us to remember this. Before we can say that we will just 'let God do it' we also need to do what we can do in the situation at hand. When some folks learn of the sovereignty of God, they fold their arms and say, "What will be, will be"

What are *your* responses for *your* behavior or disobediences to the Word of God and/or those in authority over you? We are subject to the Lord and His Word and to the governing authorities in the areas where we live. Are you taking responsibility for your behaviours/your actions?

Do you owe the government money or someone else that you are choosing not to pay back? Are you covering up a debt or a lie? For example... you may have gone to court for multiple speeding tickets or some other order of the court to pay back money to another party. You may not agree with the judgment given so you refuse to pay. In fact you don't work at a job for money so that you won't have the finances to pay what is owed. Or you work only for cash so that there is no record of income. Eventually, there will be consequences for your choices or actions. We are aware of a person who kept racking up speeding tickets, not paying and who has been faced with fines. Should that person continue in the rebellion, he/she could face jail time. You and I are responsible for what we do or do not do, whether we are Christian or not. We are called to be good stewards of what the Lord has given us... whether we own it or not. E.g. House/property... are we ensuring it is being taken care of? These things don't care for themselves but the Lord teaches us about stewardship (personal... housing... rent to own or whatever).

Are you continuing to indulge yourself in the lusts of the flesh (sexual sin/immorality; sorcery; astrology etc. etc.)

There has been occasion when we have given direction to a woman and man (both Christian) who were not living together but were sleeping together and having 'overnights'. The woman wanted to do what was right in the Lord's sight and because of a fear of the Lord, stopped that sexual part of the relationship. The man on the other hand chose to continue in his old ways. The woman has continued to be blessed and grow in her walk with the Lord and the man has remained more dormant and in fact regressed in his relationship with God. He chose the flesh over the fear of the Lord.

Don't ever kid yourself... all that is hidden in darkness will be revealed in the Light of the sovereign Lord. ." He is a most patient God, but even as Jesus said to Satan, 'thou shall not test the Lord Your God...'" He has limits.

With attitudes and behaviours like those, people sometimes do nothing (rebellion),

or excuse their behavior on the basis of their unbalanced understanding of God's sovereignty.

When you understand and embrace what the Bible teaches about the character and sovereignty of God, you will find calm in the center of life's storms. (As P.R. would say, 'God's storms are His mercies in disguise'). You will find order comes in the midst of disorder.

To know that the Lord rules over all, that there are no "accidents" in life, neither tactics of man or Satan can ever thwart the will of God. This can bring us comfort in the midst of the storm.

It makes it easy then to understand how the promise of Rom. 8:28-30 can be true... God causes all things to work together for good....

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4. **Our times are in His Hands.**
5. **Fear and doubt are conquered by a faith that rejoices.**

God's there. Remember *Who He is*. He is eternal. Check out Ps. 90:1, 2/ 1Tim.6:15, 16/ Deut. 33:27/ Isa. 40:28 "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, does not faint or grow weary; there is no searching of His understanding."

One thing will always remain: God. And because He is immutable (unchanging), He will always be the same. Your husband, wife, children, parents, and loved ones may be taken away, but God will always be there. He will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb.13:5).

FACT: YOUR HISTORY MAY CHANGE BUT GOD WILL NOT! He is everlasting.

Prov. 18:10 says, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and is safe".

This is what Habakkuk did when he reminded himself of who God is and this is what you and I can do too. Focusing on who God is (sovereign/eternal) will enable us to live as more than a conqueror in very dark days. We can say with Habakkuk "Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation."

In this we see the name YHWH, the great I AM.

So whether you have been questioning God because of what you're going through right now, or have questioned Him about what you've been through or what others close to

you have been through; whether you've asked Him why He allowed this person to live (our son) or allowed this person to die (insert name)... you are not alone on planet earth and for us earthlings that is normal questioning.

Just like every person who's ever asked, "Where's God when bad things are happening?" we can now take the tools we've just talked about, add them to our toolbox and use them or we can pull the dusty and rusty tools out of the toolbox and use them. Point is ... USE THEM!

And just like Habakkuk's existence and welfare did not depend on fig trees, fruit, olives, fields yielding crops, or on cattle in the stalls, so for you and I, our existence and welfare need to be only on the great I AM. He is always there and He is eternal. His existence depended on his YHWH, the self-existent I AM. I AM would always be there as Habakkuk's strength, giving him hinds' feet that would not slip. His I AM would enable him to live above his circumstances, whatever they might be. He is our I AM! He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

He will protect, heal and deliver as HE sees fit. He will work all things together for good and sometimes that means the greater good. HIS PLAN/HIS PURPOSE/HIS WAY/IN HIS TIMING.

Alter call and prayer

So Lord we come before You now and we submit our way/ our plan/ our timing into Your sovereign Hands. Please forgive us for not trusting You and for saying to You... "What do You think You're doing?"

Lord, please forgive us for any stubborn and foolish pride, rebellion, idolatry or hidden sin in our lives. We confess that we have sinned against You and our brothers/sisters in Christ.

We ask and give You permission to shine the Light of Your Spirit on the dark places in our hearts and minds and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We now receive Your forgiveness, even as we forgive ourselves. We release our judgments against You or our brother or sister (insert name[s]) in Christ or out of Christ. We choose to walk by faith and not by sight. We choose to walk in obedience to Your Word and Your Holy Spirit. We choose to submit to Your authority in our lives and ask for Your Divine order to be established even as the Fear of the Lord be established in us.

Thank You Lord for understanding our failings and shortcomings. Thank You for loving

me and giving me another chance.

In Jesus' Name...

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