

Hymns: 8 Great Is Thy Faithfulness 43 Holy, Holy Holy

Good Morning

Why do bad things happen to good people?

We want to consider that question today.

Our Scripture comes from Romans, chapter 8, verses 18 through 23.

*[18] For I reckon that the **sufferings** of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

*[19] For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

*[20] For the creation was **made subject to vanity, not willingly**, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,*

*[21] Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the **bondage of corruption** into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

*[22] For we know that the whole creation **groaneth and travaileth in pain** together until now.*

*[23] And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves **groan** within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

These verses paint a **grim picture** of our **current** state of affairs on this earth:

- Sufferings
- Vanity (futility)
- Bondage
- Corruption
- Groaning and travailing
- Pain

How is it that an **all-mighty** and **all-good** God can permit all of this **pain and suffering** in the world?

That question has challenged theologians for centuries . It takes various forms:

- The problem of evil
- The problem of pain
- The problem of suffering

Now, before we get started, We need to understand that it's futile to question God or his motives. That's not what we're trying to do here. God is perfect. He does nothing that is not perfect.

Isaiah 55

**[8]** For my thoughts are **not** your thoughts, neither are your ways **my ways**, saith the LORD.

**[9]** For **as** the heavens are higher than the earth, so are **my ways** higher than your ways, and my thoughts **than** your thoughts.

What we are doing is trying to understand our God better in an effort to:

1. come to grips with difficult circumstances of our own lives, and
2. learn how address these challenges to our faith when they come from others.

I know in my life, there were times when I cried out to God, “Why?”

No doubt, many of you have had the same experience.

As children we learned:

**“God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for our food.”**

Despite all of the nonsense about man-made climate change, we witness many natural disasters that cannot be pinned on man. If God is all-good and all-powerful, He certainly could rid the world of all this evil and pain.

Now let's break this down.

Is God all-good? The Bible proclaims that He is.

[And] Jesus said [unto him, Why callest thou me good?] **none is good**, save one, that is, God. (Luke 18:19)

O give thanks unto the LORD; for **he is good**: for his mercy endureth for ever. (Psalm 136:1)

**There is none holy as the LORD**: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. (I Samuel 2:2)

[Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the] **goodness of God endureth continually**. (Psalm 52:1)

The Bible says we have a good, merciful, holy God. Goodness cannot be the issue.

What about God's greatness?

Could it be that He just does not have **enough power** to overcome all of this evil? No, the Bible also describes Him as **the almighty God**.

Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by **thy** great power and stretched out arm, and there is **nothing too hard** for thee: (Jeremiah 32:17)

Genesis 17:1

*[1] And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, **I am the Almighty God**; walk before me, and be thou perfect.*

Matthew 19:26

*[26] [But] Jesus [beheld them, and] said [unto them], With men this is impossible; but **with God all things are possible.***

Revelation 16:7

*[7] And I heard **another** out of the altar say, Even so, **Lord God Almighty**, true and righteous are thy judgments.*

So we know God is both almighty and all-good. If that is the case, how can he allow pain and suffering of good people?

First of all, the Bible makes it clear---there are **no** good people.

Romans 3:10

**[10]** As it is written, There is **none righteous**, no, not one...

In other words, if good people deserved to live free from bad things, it doesn't matter, because **there are none** and man does not **deserve** freedom from consequences of his his bad choices.

**God made man free moral agent** so man could freely express love. **Free will made evil possible. Man chose evil** (Genesis 3:6) starting the cycle of death, evil, suffering, and pain (Genesis 3:13–19, Romans 8:22). God even destroyed evil from the earth at the flood but not man's evil heart (Jeremiah 17:9) and so it returned.

Which leads us to a major component of the problem.

When man fell, God placed **a curse** upon the earth and everything in it (Genesis 3:13–19). **Death** was a big part of this curse with all of the pain and deterioration that comes with the **aging process**. A once perfect creation (Genesis 1:31) was no more.

As we saw last time, administration of the earth was given first to man by God at creation (Genesis 1:26; 2:15), but when man fell, he forfeited his role giving his dominion over to a new master. It's Satan who's running things down here now. We know this because he offered the whole world to Jesus if He would only bow down and worship him:

And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is **delivered unto me**; and to whomsoever **I will**, I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. (Luke 4:5–7)

We also learned last time, that Satan is "*the God of this world*" (2 Corinthians 4:4) "*the prince and power of the air*" (Ephesians 2:2). He is restrained though, especially when it comes to what he can do to those who know the Lord as is illustrated in the life of Job. Satan had to go to God to

ask permission to bring trouble upon righteous Job. God granted his request, within limits. It's comforting to realize that Satan does not have free rein with those who know God.

Last time we recounted some of Job's trials, but do you know what started them?

Job chapter 1

You may recall we read:

*[7] And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*

But take a look at the very next verse:

*[8] And the LORD said unto Satan, **Hast thou considered my servant Job**, that there is **none like him in the earth**, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*

God was challenging Satan to test Job. Why? Because Job was the most righteous man on the earth.

After Satan took all of Job's possessions and children through murder and calamity, what did Job do?

*[20] Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and **worshipped**,*

*[21] And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*

He mourned for sure, but he also worshiped. It looks like he passed the first test.

So what did God do? He challenged Satan a **second** time:

Job 2

*[3] And the LORD said unto Satan, **Hast thou considered my servant Job**, that there is **none like him in the earth**, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? **and still he holdeth fast his integrity**, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.*

This time God allows Satan to heap even more woe on Job, afflicting him from head to toe with boils.

*[9] Then said **his wife** unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? **curse God, and die.***

*[10] But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? **In all this did not Job sin with his lips.***

Okay, now we're getting somewhere. We have murder and mayhem, natural disasters and disease. And who was the source? the **god of this world**—the one presently in charge.

I John 5:19 tells us that "*the whole world lieth in wickedness.*" Perhaps now it's a little easier to understand why things are so bad down here presently.

### Why Evil?

We know man is fallen and cursed and Satan is in charge, but **still** God retains ultimate authority. What is God up to in permitting all of this evil? It's true there are a number of other factors at work. We will look at four:

1. There are **tests**. Abraham was called "the friend of God" yet he faced trials and heartache in his life. These were mostly **character building tests** provided by God Himself. Abraham waited

for his promised son until all hope was gone (Genesis 18:11–14). Then God told Abraham to sacrifice that son as a test (Genesis 22:1–2). As we saw, God said there was none like Job in all the earth, yet God also permitted, at Satan’s hand, much pain, sorrow, and suffering into Job’s life. **Job** was brought very low, even to the point of asking *why* he was born (Job 3:11). And we just read, **Jesus** also was tested by Satan in the wilderness.

2. Scripture gives many illustrations of God’s **higher purpose**. Jesus’ disciples asked *why* a **man was born blind**. Jesus told them it was so He could give him sight and demonstrate God’s works (John 9:1–7). Then there was **Joseph**, who was sold by his brothers into slavery, betrayed by his master’s wife, and forgotten in prison before being suddenly transported to a position of great authority. In explaining *why* to his brothers he said “*ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good*” (Genesis 50:20). The **Apostle Paul** described his pain this way, “*there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness*” (II Corinthians 12:7–8). God used Satan’s messenger to bring pain for Paul’s benefit. Finally, **Jesus** bowed to God’s higher purpose yet still asked from the cross, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” (Mark 15:34b).
3. God has said that there’s a law of sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7–8). God will not protect man from the consequences of his own willful evil and bad judgment.
4. Finally, we know God will send **judgment** against individuals (Proverbs 11:31) and nations (Deuteronomy 8:20) that turn their backs on Him. God sent disastrous plagues upon pagan Egypt for not obeying God’s command to let His people go (Genesis 12:29–30). He judged the nation of Israel, making them wander in the wilderness for forty years, because they didn’t trust that He would deliver the Promised Land to them (Numbers 32:13). Christians can expect to receive God’s correction to warn us, teach us, and keep us from straying (I Corinthians 11:32; Hebrews 12:5–11, Job 23:10, Revelation 3:19).

So is this all there is forever---testing, pain **for** higher purpose, sowing and reaping, and judgment? The answer is **no**.

My Sunday School teacher once asked, how could God allow all of this evil? From the back of the room a wise man raised his hand. His answer was simple. “God’s not finished yet.” We’re in the middle of the production right now. Things don’t seem to be working out too well at the moment. Just as in the case of Joseph, things looked pretty grim for many years. But suddenly the trial ended. God gave him great rewards. The same will be true for those who know him (Romans 8:28).

This suffering is temporary. The earth is under a temporary curse (Romans 8:21–22). Imperfection started at the fall and was defeated at the cross (I Corinthians 15:54–57). But God continues to wait patiently, **enduring evil**, as more come to know Him. (II Peter 3:8–9).

Back when man fell, God promised a redeemer (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 3:16), the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). This whole thing started with God’s love, and through the exercise of His love, He purchased back lost man. While we remain for **this short span of life**, we must endure evil, but before long, because of Jesus Christ, those who accept Him will live to be part of that final paradise where there is no more death, evil, sorrow, or pain (Revelation 21:4).

Let's go back to our text. Amid all of the pain and suffering in that passage, there was hope. Did you see it?

*[18] For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the **glory which shall be revealed in us.***

*[19] For the **earnest expectation** of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

*[20] For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,*

*[21] Because the **creation itself also shall be delivered** from the bondage of corruption **into the glorious liberty of the children of God.***

*[22] For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

*[23] And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.***

These verses declare an end to this misery is in view. That end occurs when we who know the Lord rise again and when God remakes heaven and earth.

### **Good from Evil**

As with the testing of Job, training of Joseph, and trial of Jesus, we can rest assured that despite appearances, God will make all things right. Job's losses were restored two fold, Joseph was made the effective ruler of the most powerful nation on earth, and Jesus brought the offer of eternal life to all mankind through His death. Good can come from bad things.

### **Benediction**

#### **Ephesians 3:20-21**

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.