

**Joke:** An exhausted lady drags herself to the doctor's office.

Doctor asks, "what seems to be trouble."

"Doctor, there are dogs all over my neighborhood," she said. "They bark all day and all night, and I can't get a wink of sleep."

Doctor says, "I'm going to prescribe some sleeping pills, a few of these and your troubles will be over."

"Great," "I'll try anything."

A few weeks later, she returns, looking worse than ever. "Doctor, it didn't work! I'm more tired than before!"

"I don't understand how that could be," said the doctor, shaking his head. "Those are the strongest pills on the market!"

"Maybe so, but I'm still up all night chasing those dogs, and when I finally catch one, it's impossible getting him to swallow the pill!"

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God is good. . . All the time.      And all the time. . . God is good.

I want you to be honest for a moment, have you ever doubted that statement? I mean we say it, but have you ever doubted it? Has there ever been a time that you doubted the goodness of God?

I know as a Christian as a lover of Jesus, we're not supposed to ever doubt. Scripture tells us to walk by faith and not by sight. It also tells us that the goodness of God is meant to draw us to repentance.

And I know as followers of Jesus we should always have faith in the goodness of God? Amen

But I wonder if any of you, like I have on occasions, ever doubted in that moment when you're experiencing something that didn't seem quite fair, that didn't seem right, and you thought, "God doesn't really feel good right now." At the very least you wonder where He is in the situation you find yourself in.

And honestly, it could be from a number of things. You lose a job. Your parents divorced. You felt betrayed by someone especially a fellow believer, maybe a loved one died.

It might have been when you asked the question, "Why, God, won't you take away these migraines?" "Why am I still battling with depression?"

Or it could be just an ordinary, everyday moment when you're thinking, God, I'm trying to do what's right. I go to church. I give sometimes. I try to be kind to people, even help out when I can.

I'm trying to do what's right, but God, I'm just not happy.

And you start to think, I just thought by this point in my life, at this point on my journey with you, God, I thought I'd be so much more happy.

Maybe it's none of those issues, maybe it's more like when you look at the issues going around the world, you see children are starving, we just wonder God where are you? You wonder God, why do the innocent suffer?

Or maybe you wonder what's up with this woke culture we see and you start wondering, questioning even God how can this be happening.

If you've ever questioned the goodness of God, then there's something in this message for you today. I'm starting a new series called Wonder Why. And today we are looking at, Why Did God Let It Happen?"

That question has been asked probably since the beginning of time.

If you go back 300 years before the birth of Jesus, there was a Greek philosopher named Epicurus who questioned the nature of God concerning good and evil.

He had two statements and a question. The first statement was this. He said, "If God is not able to prevent evil, if he can't stop bad things from happening, then God must not be all-powerful."

How many know God is still all powerful.

His second statement was: "If God's not willing to prevent evil, then he must not be all good."

You do realize that God is still good right?

Those two statements led to this question: "If God is both willing and able to prevent evil, then why does evil exist?"

In other words, why did God let it happen?

And honestly, that's a question a lot of people have asked.

Today as we look at scripture, there's one thing I pray that I will accomplish today, and that is to show you that as a follower of Jesus, the Son of God, makes sense of, gives meaning to, and more importantly offers a solution for the evil and suffering that we all will experience.

In order to do that let me lay a foundation from the scriptures to help us get a better understanding of why God lets some things take place.

Before I get started however let me just say this up front, sometimes things happen because of the choices we make.

Scripture takes about sowing and reaping. You reap what you sow. Ever heard that? So, sometimes we go through trouble and situations as a consequence of what we did or said.

On the other hand I also want to show you that the Bible never says, fellow Jesus and you will avoid pain, evil, troubles, or suffering.

As a matter of fact Jesus said this. . .

John 16:33 (NIV): 33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

And as you read through stories in the Bible, you're going to see so many accounts of people, believers even, feeling a sense of anguish and confusion, suffering, and pain.

In the Old Testament, we find Jeremiah the prophet, he's known as "the weeping prophet," and he's wailing, crying out to God in grief because of the unrepentant people.

And he asks, "God, why won't they turn to you?"

If you look at David another Old Testament character I'm sure you've heard of him right, a man scripture described as a man "after God's own heart." David the same one that took out Goliath, he's so in love with God, worshipping God in the temple,

trusting God again and again, yet, even that guy a man after God's own heart cries out to God and says, "Are you listening, God? "Do you even care? "Why don't you come to my defense when I'm in trouble?"

Flip over to the New Testament and we find John the Baptist, whose sole purpose was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

He said, "I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals.

Then this John the Baptizer, the cousin of the Messiah whose whole ministry and life was devoted to preparing the way for Jesus, is wrongly arrested, and awaits what turns out to be his execution.

And Jesus could have come and delivered him, instead, Jesus doesn't, and John was beheaded.

And I just have to think as he sat in that prison cell he was asking, "Where in the world are you, God?"

Think about it John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "are you the one or should we look for another." That was after he heard a voice from heaven say, "this is my beloved son..." as Jesus was being baptized by John.

But the example I want to use today of this idea is from the Old Testament, from a prophet named Asaph.

Has anybody ever heard of Asaph before?

There are 12 different Psalms that are attributed to Asaph. He was not only a poet, but he was also a prophet, and he was the worship leader in the tabernacle.

That was Asaph. He was close to God, but yet, he said, "I was starting to stumble."

Look at it. . .

Psalm 73:2–3 (NIV): But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. 3 For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

When he saw the wicked doing better than him he started to question.

He continues. . .

Psalm 73:4–5 (NIV): They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. 5 They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills.

He was complaining that the wicked, those who did wrong, seemed to get all the blessings, and he honestly just didn't understand where God was in it all.

Have you ever felt like that before? God, do you even see this?

Then he says. . .

Psalm 73:12 (NIV): This is what the wicked are like— always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.

There's more he adds this to the equation. . .

Psalm 73:13–14 (NIV): Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. 14 All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments

Let me just pause here and say this, it is never in vain when you keep your heart pure. I don't care what it looks like, or if it appears like the wicked are being more blessed than you. The Lord is calling you and I to live right, and do right no matter what others might be doing.

You stay true to what God has called you too, and don't compromise God's Word for the cultures thinking.

**(Talk about Revelation 20 and 21 and the first listed is a coward)**

Back to Asaph

This worship leader wonders, "Where's God? "Why are you letting this happen?"

Today, I want to look at some of those tough questions, and to be honest, I don't have a clear, I know the answer to that for all of them. Some we will probably make you think a bit.

But the truth is church, God can if you ever have or have ever, God can handle those doubts.

One question that you may have heard or maybe even asked yourself is. . .

If God is a good God, if God is loving, then why would he allow suffering?

If God is a good God, then why would He let someone who didn't do anything wrong go through what they're going through?

Why would God allow this to happen?

Let me give you the answer but before I do what do you to think is the answer?

Here's the answer if your taking notes, if love is a choice, then suffering is a possibility.

If it's possible to love, it's also possible to hurt?

Let me try to explain that both logically and scripturally.

We have to understand that the only way that love is possible is to have a choice to choose love.

The theological term is free will.

What does free will mean? Free will is simply the ability to choose.

In other words, if you have the ability to choose love, you also have the ability to choose hate. If you have the ability to choose what's right, you also have the ability to choose what's wrong.

And that's what makes evil and suffering possible. So, why did God give us free will, then? And the answer is, because that is the only way that love is possible.

If he didn't give us the ability to choose, then we couldn't choose to love him.

Let me continue to answer that question with a question. . .

Why did God let Satan come into the garden? And the answer is, because God would be an unfair God, if He gave us free choice, but then, no choices.



So God let the serpent in and let Adam and Eve choose if they wanted to listen to what He spoke or believe the lies the serpent spoke.

And now God is calling us as ambassadors of Christ to go into all the world and give everyone the same choice as Adam and Eve had.

Ultimately why did he give us free will? Because He didn't want robots, He wanted us to choose a relationship.

God is love. He wants us to receive his love, and he wants us to choose to love him back for who he is.

And in order to be loved, we have to be able to choose love.

So, in order for us to have the freedom to choose love, we also have the freedom to choose evil.

Remember at the beginning of my message I talked about sowing and reaping. When we choose evil, we choose what the Bible calls sin. And what does sin do? It leads to pain and suffering.

So, for God to remove evil and suffering, He has to do one of two things. He either has to remove our freedom to choose, or he has to remove us. You pick.

Here's a question most people don't ask, but should. If there is no God, then who decides what's evil? Or if there is no God, who's going to decide, what's right and what's wrong?

I listen I know we live in a culture today that says, we can all have our own truth, but that is not the truth.

The truth is there has to be an authority in order to have a standard. If there is no God, then there is no moral point of reference. If there is no God, then who determines what is good and what is evil?

Growing up my parents had rules, my guess is yours did too, some I didn't care for others they weren't so bad, but I knew what was right and what was wrong according to the rules they set.

If my curfew was 11 I needed to be home by 11.

Another question some ask is, "Well, if you suffer, that means God doesn't love you."

What we have to do is understand that suffering isn't evidence of the lack of love.

The presence of pain isn't a lack of love.

In fact, oftentimes, the presence of real pain is the evidence of real love.

Have you ever disciplined your child? Is it because you hate your children? Of course not, it's because you love your children, and you have or want something better for them.

Let me try and wrap up today with one last question. And that is this: Why do bad things happen to good people?

Have you ever wondered that? Why does someone who didn't do anything wrong have something so bad and so tragic happen in their life?

And the easy answer is, because the rain falls on the just and the unjust.

But there's also a harder answer that you probably haven't given much thought to.

Are you ready? It may be hard to hear, are you still ready?

Ok here you go, the answer is you probably aren't as good as you think.

I don't know about you but I have said some things I shouldn't have said and some of those things I've said have hurt others.

I know that probably shocked all of you but there's something else. . .

I have had some thoughts pop into my head that weren't all happy thoughts and I've done things I wish I wouldn't have.

See hears what Scripture tells us. . .

Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV): 9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Romans 3:23 (NLT): For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

Truth is there was only one who ever lived that is truly good, do you know who that was? Jesus

So, honestly something bad only happened to someone good one time, and He, Jesus, volunteered for it.

The innocent one who never did anything wrong took on the punishment for our sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (TPT): For God made the only one who did not know sin to become sin for us, so that we who did not know righteousness might become the righteousness of God through our union with him.

He is the only one who is good.

In spite of that what did God do for us? He suffered for us.

He suffered for you and me. He was mocked. Rejected by those closest to him and abandoned by his friends. Falsely accused when he did nothing wrong and wrongly imprisoned.

Jesus, the only one who was good, was beaten, tortured, stripped naked, hung shamefully on a cross, and the worst of all, and also best of all, is that the one who was good, the Lamb of God, became sin for us.

The innocent one took the sins of the world to die for them, so that we could be forgiven.

Jesus did this for us.

After a lifetime of perfect intimacy with the Father, Jesus was separated from that intimacy, and then he cried out the same question you might have cried out before.

Matthew 27:46 (NIV): About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

Why does it feel like you've left me? I didn't do anything wrong, I've served you faithfully. I've been obedient.

And Jesus did that for us. He did that for you. He did that for me.

So why does God allow that to happen in your life?

And honestly, I can't answer that directly for every situation.

Why are you going through what you're going through? Why doesn't God do what He could do in your situation? Why did someone do what they did to you when God could have stopped it?

And the answer is, I don't know.

But I do know what the answer is not. And the answer is not that God doesn't love you, because scripture is very clear when it comes to the love of God.

John 3:16 (TPT): For this is how much God loved the world—he gave his one and only, unique Son as a gift. So now everyone who believes in him will never perish but experience everlasting life.

Love is not just something that he does; it's who He is.

For God so loved the world that, what did he do? He gave

What did God do? How much does he love us? God loves us so much, that he took your misery, he took your suffering, your pain and nailed it to the cross so that you could live forgiven and free.

He knew that it takes a death to have a resurrection. Sometimes, it takes a loss to overcome and find victory. Sometimes it's out of bondage that you step in and find freedom.

He knew that even out of the darkness, he is so good and so powerful and so present that he can bring good even out of the bad.

He knows in your life, something better is coming.

What does the Bible say? The Bible doesn't say you won't have a hard time. The Bible doesn't say you'll never hurt. The Bible doesn't say you won't go through something unfair.

Psalm 23:4 (TPT): Lord, even when your path takes me through the valley of deepest darkness, fear will never conquer me, for you already have! You remain close to me and lead me through it all the way. Your authority is my strength and my peace. The comfort of your love takes away my fear. I'll never be lonely, for you are near.

Something better's coming.

Revelation 21:4 (TPT): He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and eliminate death entirely. No one will mourn or weep any longer. The pain of wounds will no longer exist, for the old order has ceased."

Imagine in the presence of God, no more loss. No more sickness. No more rejection. No more heartache. No more shame, no more grief, no more depression, no more abuse, no more crying yourself to sleep. No more pain.

We're not there yet. We still live in a broken world with broken people.

And that's why, in the moment when something seems unfair, it's easy to conclude, "God must not be good."

But, not in just a moment, but when you walk with Jesus, you feed on his Word, you learn to trust his presence, you let him comfort you in the middle of grief, and somehow, he gives you a peace that doesn't make any sense, and in that moment, when

He may not feel good, if you continue to walk with him you'll see his faithfulness, and you will conclude, "God is good." And all the time, our God is good.

Remember Asaph? He's the guy who said this: "Does God even know what's happening?" The guy who said, "Did I keep my heart pure for nothing, "I've got trouble all day long, "The morning brings nothing but pain," this is what he said after walking with God faithfully.

He said, "When I tried to understand all this, "it troubled me deeply."

I love his honesty, because it's okay sometimes that we don't like it and we don't understand. He said, "It bothered me. "It didn't seem fair. "It troubled me deeply,

But then he concluded with this. . .

Psalm 73:17 (NIV): till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.

Until I got in his presence, until I experienced his goodness, until his grace sustained me.

And Asaph went on to say. . .

Psalm 73:26 (NIV): My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

I didn't understand it, and I didn't like it until. . .I entered the sanctuary of God.

**(Talk about benefits of being in the sanctuary)**

So, for those of you that are suffering and hurting right now I want you to know, God hurts with you.

And what may feel like the worst thing in your life, and may very well be the worst thing in your life.

God is going to work all things out for good. It may not happen this week or even this year. But there will come a day if you will remain faithful that you will be able to look back and even though you would never want to go through it again. You will see His faithfulness, and how He used it for His glory.

As the song says, He's a Way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness, my God, that is who you are. And even when I don't see it, He's working, even if I can't feel it, He's working.

He's working never doubt again the goodness of God.