

The Good In the Bad

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Good, good music. If you have Bibles, I want you to turn to Genesis chapter 50.

Genesis chapter 50. If you remember a long time ago, we were talking about Joseph. That was back before vacation Bible school, before graduation, and before the preacher decided to fall out. Slow down quite a bit. So, where were we? Well, let's get back at it. Joseph had risen through a lot of hardship to govern Egypt, through a famine, and to manage what became the breadbasket of the world. And when the brothers that sold him into slavery came to Egypt for help, they unknowingly faced him. And when he revealed himself to them, he then took in the family. He cared for them, just like his beloved daddy would want. However, when dad died, and all that's left are the sorry brothers that sold him into slavery, the plot thickens. Genesis chapter 50, beginning in verse 15, it says this, when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, it may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him. So they sent a message to Joseph saying, your father gave this command before he died, say to Joseph, please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin because they did evil to you. And now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father. Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, behold, we are your servants. But Joseph said to them, do not fear.

For am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good to bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today. So do not fear.

I will provide for you and your little ones. Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. What an amazing godly answer Joseph gave them. It goes above and beyond and makes him a real hero.

I mean, listen, if going from prison after being falsely accused to managing the food distribution successfully for really all the known world, if that don't make you a hero, and it does, by the way, I'll tell you what else does. His response to his brothers. Remember, these are the sorry brothers that sold him into slavery, and now they are scared to death of him. They had in their mind that he had saved their lives and restored them because he loved his dad. And now dad just died, and they probably wet their tunics again, bowed their knees, and said, please make us slaves. And the part that's not written or said is instead of killing us. And they didn't say that because they didn't want to give them those ideas. And he looks at them and says, I'm not God. I'm not here to judge you. You tried to do evil against me, but God used that to save many lives, including yours.

[4 : 1 8] I wonder how many times Joseph ever asked the hardest question before he ever heard the answer.

Hardest question anybody ever has asked me is why. It's the toughest question I've ever been asked, and I've been asked that many times. And before you ask me your why, I will tell you, I may not give you, I probably won't give you a definitive answer.

Because there are some things in life that we just don't know. I can give you some hints. Let me explain. Young inquisitive minds like to know, and if they're not allowed to do something, they're going to ask you why. Why can't I do that? And after several whys, at least with my girls, after several whys, it always ended up because I said so. That was about the way it ended. Not the best parenting, but that's the way it goes. But you take them to the zoo and an animal does something that you don't know how to explain to them. Instead of taking it in and just enjoying the moment, the child says why. Well, I don't know why monkeys catch their excrement and throw it.

I'm not sure. He's probably a dude, you know. I mean, don't ask, but just take it in and don't ever do it. But then there's also harder questions. Why questions that we face?

When you see a loved one suffer? When one is snuffed out too early? Why? I prayed, I've asked God to intervene, and I don't see his intervention. It's not what I anticipated. Why?

[6 : 21] Why? In April of 2011, the rural Mississippi County that we lived in got hit in a devastating EF3 tornado. And 12 hours later, after that tornado came through, another tornado came through and crossed the path of the previous tornado. The counties north and south of us got hit a lot, but this one had kind of bullseyed upon us. 200 homes were damaged. Dozens were destroyed.

50 affected homes had no insurance at all. Three were killed in that rural small county. Six were killed in the area around that county that we claimed as our own. Smithville, Mississippi, about 30 miles from us got wiped off the map. And that got a lot of attention. So a lot of crews and a lot of volunteers were going to Smithville. One of those tornadoes, after coming through, hit Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and knocked out part of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. That got a lot of attention. A lot of crews went there.

Disaster relief units flooded to those areas because of the news media. Chickasaw County didn't get a lot of attention. It wasn't until Smithville and Tuscaloosa and those type areas were saturated with folks that they began to trickle back. Or maybe somebody knew somebody in our area and their church came.

Volunteers made their way to us when other areas got full. And a couple of local pastors leaders led the command center for cleanup from the front seats of their car, directed volunteers to strategic spots to work. And I was one of those two preachers. I was a, I met a man one day whose brother died. I had heard there was damage in that area and I rode down that road and the brother would, there was a mobile home that was there and the brother was in the back of that mobile home. And the survivor was in the front room. He said the wind and the storms were coming and then he felt a stillness in the air.

And then he said, I could feel my house just begin to twist just a little bit and hear it. And he said, the next thing I knew, I was standing in the front yard and my home was gone.

[9 : 18] It was across the road, probably 75 feet, just in shambles. And his brother was in that mess.

He died in the rubble. I know a milkman who was going down the road in his milk truck, drove right through the middle of the tornado, picked up that truck and it threw him across a field and into thankfully a muddy field and he sank in the mud, broke many bones in his body.

He always walked with a limp after that, but he lived on. Amazingly after that. Then there was the lady down the street that the storm they said had just twisted her when they found her.

Why? There were a lot of why questions when I went door to door and asked how we could help. Why does a tornado come and take innocent lives?

Why does a why does God allow a person to lose their house and their home and the next one right next to it may be sorry folk next door?

[10 : 34] Their home don't even look scathed. Why my brother and not me? How do you deal with that?

It's the hardest questions. Why do my loved one make such sinful decisions? Why do I have to deal with such laws?

Why do I feel like life is so unfair? I've heard the whys. I have my own whys. And when I look deeper at my whys, I begin to find an answer about other people's whys.

Sometimes I have whys about things in Scripture. That's what sermons come from. One that I came across that gets me is in 2 Samuel 23, verse 20.

And it says, and Benaiah, the son of Jehuda, was a valiant man of Kabziel, a doer of great deeds.

[11 : 39] He struck down two arrows of Moab. He also went down and struck down a lion in a pit on a day when snow had fallen. Okay, well, maybe that's not earth-shattering, brain-twisting passages.

I don't know. But you wasn't in the snowy pit with him, were you? Because the difference in major and minor events are who's involved in it. And if I'm involved in it, it gets pretty major for me.

Now, if I heard of someone in a pit with a lion, not a big deal. I might even turn the channel. But if I'm in a pit with a lion on a snowy day and I make it out alive, I'm speaking at Wild Game Fest all over the nation riding around on a big old bus.

It's a major deal. But why in Scripture? Well, that passage in Scripture is there because it was a significant happening in his life and it would have seemed really bad.

However, when he walked out of that pit with a few scratches and realized what he had conquered, it made him stronger to face much more in life because this man did mighty things for God.

[12 : 53] He was a priest, but he was not the kind of priest that you would think of when you think of a priest. He was a worship leader. He was an intercessor.

He was a man of God. He was honorable in his walk, but also in the strength as a protector. He's the one that escorted Solomon during his coronation parade.

He was a hero killer. He killed a man that stood seven and a half feet tall that carried a Goliath-sized spear. Benaiah, with a staff in his hand, snatched the spear out of the man's hand and killed him with it.

Not only that, but he commanded David's 30 mighty men and he was a mighty man and he did many mighty things and one of them was that he killed a lion on a snowy day in a pit.

Now, I understand that most people would run from a lion, but if you do, it'll do you no good because a lion can run 35 miles per hour.

[14 : 03] I know because I outran one one day. When they don't want to run, they can leap 30 feet in a single bound.

They eat manwich for lunch. But Danaiah faced it and he killed it. You never know what you'll have to face and you're bothered and disturbed and even mad about what you have to face.

However, it's the things that we have to face that make us ready for whatever it is God's preparing us for. It's the things that we face that make us stronger in him.

It's the things that we face that help us to grow. Benaiah was a lot more than a lion killer, but his lion killing strength strengthened him for other things that God had in store for him.

So why do bad things happen to good people? Preparation. Sometimes it happens to prepare us for more that he has in store.

[15 : 30] Let me tell you about a horrible natural disaster that overwhelms anything and everything that we've ever experienced or that we've heard about concerning weather-related tragedies.

A long, long time ago there was a flood, a huge flood, so catastrophic that the whole earth flooded. Not just part of it, all of it.

Only one extended family survived. And the only animals that survived were the ones that boarded onto that boat or those that lived in the sea.

It was a, those that lived in the sea. It was a complete cleansing of the land. And it had never happened before. It has never happened since.

It will not happen again. It's guaranteed by the greatest meteorologist that has ever lived. As a matter of fact, this meteorologist is the one that developed meteorology and created the sun and the moon and the stars and placed them in orbit.

[16 : 35] Why in the world would a loving God destroy the whole earth as it was known and preserve one family and many pairs of animals to replenish it?

To cleanse it? It says it over and over again in Genesis chapter 6 that he wanted to cleanse the earth of evil and lead all living to turn their eyes to him.

So why do bad things happen to good people? Because even good people are guilty. As a matter of fact, it could be argued there ain't any good people. Even wonderful people are not perfect.

And those events prepare us for what's to come. But there's another reason why bad things happen and that's reflection. Bad things happen to cause us to reflect upon our lives and upon God and to turn our eyes to him.

And when we do that, cleansing can come that way. I mean, if that's hard for you to understand, you're not the first one.

[17 : 50] Let me reiterate. Joseph's brothers had a hard time with it. They had sold their younger, more favored brother into slavery and then made him out for dead. They had went about their way until a famine came and in their hunger, they went to the only place that they could find relief and that was Egypt.

There they found the governor of Egypt who held the world's economies in his silos. And little did they know that the governor was their long-souled brother who had prospered and succeeded either in spite of their action or because of their action.

And once he confronted them, he also comforted them. He also provided for them. And then their mutual father died and they knew they were in trouble.

Notice what happens in our passage. The brothers got together and thought, maybe he did the good that he did for us for the sake of daddy. Now what do we do? And they grew very afraid and they sent a message to him.

But it's not what they said, it's what he said and I'll reiterate. It says, but Joseph said to them, do not fear for I am, am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me but God meant it for good.

[19 : 12] To bring it about that many people should be kept alive as they are today. How in the world could God have meant such a thing for good? I mean, Joseph said without his God-given insight and preparation for this famine, many more would have died due to the famine.

God allowed the dreams that he had, God allowed the slavery that he endured, God allowed the prison that he endured, God allowed even the forgetfulness because if you don't remember, they left him in prison for two years because his friends forgot about him.

Didn't tell what his abilities were. And that two years in prison actually was spiritually strategic because when he came out, the timing of the famine was upon them.

It was all in God's plan but it sure didn't feel like it when he was in the dungeon. However, by doing that, in that amount of time, Joseph showed up at the proper place, at the proper time to feed the known world.

Why do bad things happen to good people? Scripture tells us, as I've mentioned already, that we're not good. Don't take offense to that.

[20 : 38] We're all in the same boat. We've done wrong and that separates us from God. Outside of Christ, we'd have no hope of reunion with God. But because of what Christ did for us and demonstrated his own love for us that while we were yet sinners, while he knew everything about us and everything we had done, yet he was willing to give his life for us to have the opportunity to come back to the Lord.

So why do bad things happen? I'll tell you why. Salvation. Earthquakes and tsunamis, they're bad things, aren't they?

You've seen the devastation that happens with that. Bad things come from them, but does anything good come from them? Yes. Of course it does. Peter Ward and Donald Brownlee explain in their book Rare Earth how earthquakes and the ensuing tsunamis are necessary.

There is an anthropic principle at work. In other words, we need them to live. Let me explain as best I can and I am science illiterate.

earthquakes and tsunamis are the consequence of plate tectonics. That's the giant plates of rock and earth that move below the surface of the earth.

[22 : 08] And earth is unique in having such plates. And without them, there would be no large mountain ranges or continents. Without the movement of them, which causes these disasters, the earth's land would be submerged to the depth of several thousand feet.

Fish could live here, we could not. Plate tectonics regulate our climate. They prevent scorching and freezing temperatures. As a matter of fact, the movement of these plates are necessary for us to live.

So why did God build it where earthquakes are necessary? Or why didn't he build it where they wasn't necessary?

Ward is an eminent paleontologist and Brownlee is a college professor astronomer. And they say that some creatures could live here without earthquakes but not Homo sapiens.

And if you forgot, that's us, by the way. Our planet requires oxygen and we need a warming sun and we need water.

[23 : 16] Now, I will warn you that sun can cause a sunstroke and water can cause drowning. However, both give life and both are necessary for us to live.

So why do bad things happen to good people? It may surprise you so that we can live. Salvation.

That's why. The worst thing, the most unjust event, the most horrible happening in all of history could easily cause one to beg the question, why?

Why? Why? Why does God's son leave his home in heaven to come into a very humble means and live his life as a servant for many?

Why did the people he came to mostly reject him, falsely accuse him and fail to acknowledge that he was the only perfect person to ever live?

[24 : 26] Why did they become so adamant about being against him that they arrested him, that they falsely accused him, that they beat him nearly to death only to hang him on the cross of the cruelest death known to man, crucifixion of the Roman Empire on a Roman cross?

Why did they strip him? Why did they demean him by gambling for his clothes? Why did they mock him as he died? Why did they throw his corpse into a borrowed tomb without any celebration of life?

Why did the worst thing happen to the very best person for the same reason we have earthquakes so that we can live?

Salvation. I don't think it's ironic that the earthquake quaked as he died. The worst thing happened so that the greatest thing could happen because three days later he rose proclaiming his life as he had previously done with his mouth.

In John 11, 25 he said, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me though he die yet shall he live. Why do bad things happen?

[25 : 48] Well, there's a variety of reasons but the primary one is so that we can live. Salvation or as Joseph put it, what others meant for evil and what others take as evil, God meant for good.

So why do bad things happen to prepare us, to lead us, to reflect, which leads to salvation.

Romans 8, 28 says this, and we know that for those who love God all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose.

So why do bad things happen? Because God said so. That's why. Let that be enough because God's at work.

God's at work in the good. God's at work in the bad. Praise the Lord and bless his holy name. What is it today that you need to entrust to him?

[27 : 26] It might be your life. I'm so glad you're in the house of God this morning. I'm so glad you heard the story of what Christ has done for you.

I believe it's a divine appointment. And if you're here this morning and you've never surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, I want you to know that he'll meet you where you are and if you'll just admit of your need of him and ask him to save you and change you, your life will forever be changed.

Today's the day of salvation. Whosoever will may come to him. Maybe you're here this morning and you've done that but you've only acknowledged that privately.

You've never acknowledged that publicly. And Jesus says if you're ashamed of me before others I'll be ashamed of you before my Father. What that means is it's not real if you're ashamed of it.

So in reality if you've never publicly acknowledged the salvation that God's given you, I encourage you to come. Jesus by his commission, by his example told us to follow that with baptism. We'd love to guide you in that process.

[28 : 39] We're not doing it this morning. We'll set that up in the future but you obey God as he speaks to your heart and life. Maybe you're