**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**When Bad Things Happen To Us**

When bad things happen to us, we often ask, “why?” We lose our job at a time we need it so desperately, and we ask “why?” When a loved one is taken from us unexpectedly, maybe at a very inopportune time, we wonder, why did God allow this to happen in this way and at this time. God does not give us specific answers to these questions. But how does God want us to respond when we face these hardships in life? This is the focus of our lesson today, and we are glad you are with us.

When bad things happen, God may not tell us exactly why it happened, but what He does tell us to do is to trust Him at times like this, and to continue to follow Him. Prov. 3:5-6 says, *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart,* *And lean not on your own understanding;*  *In all your ways acknowledge Him,* *And He shall direct your paths.*  Also Psalm 37:3-6, “*Trust in the LORD, and do good;* *Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.*  *Delight yourself also in the LORD,* *And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD,* *Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday.”*

What does it mean to trust the Lord? Let me illustrate it with this story. One night a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, “Jump! I’ll catch you.” He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke, and blackness. He could not see his father. As you can imagine, he was afraid to leave the roof and jump into the smoke and darkness. His father kept yelling: “Jump, I will catch you.” But the boy protested, “Daddy, I can’t see you.” The father replied, “But I can see you and that’s all that matters.”

God can see His children. He knows what is ahead for them. He calls upon them to trust Him, and obey Him. Even when life doesn’t seem fair, He says trust Me and follow Me.

There are examples in scripture of God’s people not knowing what God was doing, and God allowed them to go through difficulties and hardships, but God expected them to trust Him.

There is the example of Job. You remember the story of Job*? “The LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?’”* (Job 1:8) Satan’s response was, *“Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”* Satan is saying to God that the reason Job is serving You is because of what you are doing for him. You take all that away and he will curse You. God knew that Satan’s evaluation of Job’s service to Him was wrong, and so God allowed Satan to take away Job’s possessions and his children, and later his physical health. Job’s service to God was being tested. Now, Job did not understand why these terrible things happened to him. Not only did he not understand them, the outward appearance of these events was such as to call God’s goodness and justice into question. Because we know what was going on “behind the scenes,” we can see that nothing inconsistent with either God’s goodness or His justice was allowed to happen. But none of this was explained to Job himself. It simply looked like a hostile “attack” by God. Job’s friends saw it that way and drew conclusions that were inaccurate, and made Job’s pain more perplexing. Job even drew some conclusions that were not true. But to Job’s credit, he remained faithful to God. Even though he did not understand what was happening, he never turned his back on God, and God blessed him in the end.

And then there’s the example of Joseph. Joseph was a young man, favored by his father and consequently hated by his brothers. His brothers wanted to get rid of him so they sold him as a slave to a caravan of Ishmaelites who brought him to Egypt. In Egypt he was bought by Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. He was faithful in Potiphar’s house as a servant, but Potiphar’s wife lied about him and Potiphar had Joseph put in prison. For thirteen years Joseph was a slave or a prisoner in Egypt. Why did God allow Joseph to go through all of this? There is no indication that Joseph knew what God’s plan was during these thirteen years. But God did have a plan. At age thirty Joseph was brought before Pharaoh to interpret some dreams that Pharaoh had had. In these dreams God was revealing to Pharaoh what was about to take place. There would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph advised Pharaoh to collect a portion of the produce of the land during the seven plentiful years so they would have food for the seven years of famine. Joseph was given charge of collecting the produce, and he was made a ruler over all Egypt. Later, after their father died, Joseph’s brothers were concerned that Joseph may now take vengeance on them for what they had done to him. When Joseph learned they were concerned about that, he said to them, *“Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”* (Gen. 50:19-20) Did Joseph know that this was God’s plan while he was a slave and a prisoner? There’s no indication of it, but he still maintained his faith in God.

God often appears to be unconcerned about the things we think are our “hurts.” Bad things happen and we may wonder, “where is God?” But keep in mind, God is working in the lives of His children. For example, He allowed his friend Lazarus to die rather than prevent that from happening. (This is recorded in John 11.) Lazarus’ sisters had sent to Jesus saying, *“Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.”* (John 11:3). But after Jesus had learned that he was sick, the text says, *“He stayed two more days in the place where He was.”* (verse 6). Jesus allowed Lazarus to die, and his sisters, Mary and Martha, mourned. Now, Jesus was not unconcerned about the grief that came to Mary and Martha, but Jesus had a greater good in mind than simply keeping something painful from happening. He had said in verse 4 when He learned that Lazarus was sick, *“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”* Jesus had a plan. His plan was to let Lazarus die and then He would raise him from the dead, which would bring glory to God. And that is what He did. Mary and Martha didn’t understand that while they were mourning the death of their brother.

God may appear to be unconcerned about our hurts, but all the while He is working His plan.

Faith in God means we will serve Him no matter what the circumstances are in our lives. We may not understand why we have to go through the difficulties of our lives, but we can know that God is in control, that He is working in our lives, and that He will never leave us nor forsake us as long as we are faithful to Him. We just need to remain faithful and let God work out His plans.

A good illustration of this is a story William Bennett tells in *The Book of Virtues*. He says it is an “old Jewish folktale.” This is a lengthy reading, but it illustrates the point we are making.

“Once there were two young brothers who had spent all their lives in the city, and had never even seen a field or pasture. So one day they decided to take a trip into the countryside. As they were walking along, they spied a farmer plowing, and were puzzled about what he was doing.

“What kind of behavior is this?” they asked themselves. “This fellow marches back and forth all day, scarring the earth with long ditches. Why should anyone destroy such a pretty meadow like that?”

Later in the afternoon they passed the same place again, and this time they saw the farmer sowing grains of wheat in the furrows.

“Now what’s he doing?” they asked themselves. “He must be a madman. He’s taking perfectly good wheat and tossing it into these ditches!”

“The country is no place for me,” said one of the brothers. “The people here act as if they had no sense. I’m going home.” And he went back to the city.

But the second brother stayed in the country, and a few weeks later saw a wonderful change. Fresh green shoots began to cover the field with a lushness he had never imagined. He quickly wrote to his brother and told him to hurry back to see the miraculous growth.

So his brother returned from the city, and he too was amazed at the change. As the days passed they saw the green earth turn into a golden field of tall wheat. And now they understood the reason for the farmer’s work.

Then the wheat grew ripe, and the farmer came with his scythe and began to cut it down. The brother who had returned from the city couldn’t believe it. “What is this imbecile doing now?” he exclaimed. “All summer long he worked so hard to grow this beautiful wheat, and now he’s destroying it with his own hands! He is a madman after all! I’ve had enough. I’m going back to the city”

But his brother had more patience. He stayed in the country and watched the farmer collect the wheat and take it to his granary. He saw how cleverly he separated the chaff, and how carefully he stored the rest. And he was filled with awe when he realized that by sowing a bag of seed, the farmer had harvested a whole field of grain. Only then did he truly understand that the farmer had a reason for everything he did.

“And this is how it is with God’s works, too,” he said. “We mortals see only the beginnings of His plan. We cannot understand the full purpose and end of His creation. So we must have faith in His wisdom.”

When bad things happen, we may ask “why?” God says “trust Me and follow Me.”

Our time is gone for today. We thank you for listening.

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