

## #94 “Why Do Good Things Happen to Bad People?”

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I have written much before on why God allows suffering on the part of His faithful followers and how we can be sanctified through those times of trial. Indeed, tough times do come to people who try to live in a way pleasing to God (John 16:33). Yet the flip side of the question of why bad things happen to good people is why do good things happen to bad people? And unless we remember that ultimate justice hangs in the balance of Christ's judgment and eternal consequences, we will be prone to start envying the seeming prosperity of the wicked. This can be an effective snag of the devil to get us angry with God or angry at others. Jealousy, if not controlled, can make us miserable, bitter people. We must not let this happen. Rather, we should take a look at what God says about the blessing upon the righteous and the lack thereof upon the wicked.

Psalm 1 says,

"How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,  
Nor stand in the path of sinners,  
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!  
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.  
He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,  
Which yields its fruit in its season  
And its leaf does not wither;  
And in whatever he does, he prospers.  
The wicked are not so,  
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.  
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.  
For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
But the way of the wicked will perish."

This chapter is written in a very simple way that highlights the joy and glory of serving Christ (verses 1-3) versus the utter disaster and joylessness of serving sin, self, and Satan (verses 4-6). Scripture is clear that it is the righteous man, the one who has trusted Christ by faith, who is blessed. The blessing is for the person who does not do as the wicked do but rather takes in the principles of the Word such that the fruit thereof is manifested in his life. The righteous are anchored, their future is secure, their hope unmistakable, and their eternal blessing irrevocable. But something within us might balk at this point because we have seen so many wicked people who take advantage of innocent, righteous people and seem to get away with doing wrong. In fact, the righteous suffer in many instances while the wicked entertain sinful pleasures, worldly fame and notoriety, wealth, health, and all other things which this world would define as "good," signs of "blessing," and evidence of "prosperity" and "success." But the Bible here in Psalm 1 is not defining these "good" things as being one and the same with true blessing. Biblical blessing is not

necessarily defined by health, wealth, and earthly pleasures, but it is defined by knowing Christ. I quote Psalm 16:11 often in my writing because it is so important in giving us balance and stability in our faith. It says, "You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever." Eternal life is knowing Jesus (John 17:3). It is a quality of life that starts now and a quantity of life that will never end. Knowing Jesus does not mean the absence of suffering and a guarantee of fame and wealth. What it does mean is joy that cannot be removed, peace that cannot be stolen, and an inheritance that can never be lost. God even promises to give good and perfect gifts to His children (bonus satisfying graces in this life), something the imperfections of sin can never deliver. The righteous have the eternal hope of heaven, which we are supposed to set our focus and hope entirely upon (1 Peter 1:13). Our problem when we start envying the wicked is that we get short-sighted. We forget that this life is but 70 or 80 years and we think that the wicked are better off if their 80 or so years are easier and more pleasure-filled than ours as righteous individuals. This is a grave error because as Psalm 1 says, they will have no part in the company of the righteous in heaven. They will perish and be destroyed to end up suffering for eternity in the lake of fire. They have no eternal hope but only damnation. Thus, if we take their maximum earthly sinful pleasures and add in maximum eternal pain, pain wins by an infinite margin. So, with an eternal perspective, the suffering of the righteous is nothing compared with the weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17) to come to the faithful, and the seeming prosperity of the wicked is just that, only seeming because it is only temporal. Wrath is yet to come (Colossians 3:6).

It is also important to emphasize that even in this life that the pleasures of sin are not as desirable as the pleasures that Christ gives. Faithfulness and knowing Christ and being aware of His joy and pleasure with us are much more to be desired than the passing pleasures of sin. Sin has an incessant appetite that requires more and more and more in order to reach the same level of satisfaction. In Jesus, we are always satisfied, and this satisfaction is true soul satisfaction that does not disappoint. Jesus never disappoints, and thus He tells us not to sin if we want to be blessed. He knows that sin hurts while faithfulness satisfies the soul. In eternity, He will reward us for our faithfulness because He is good and faithful Himself. None of our good deeds by faith go unnoticed, and none of the acts of the wicked will go unpunished. In the end, it is the righteous who are blessed and the wicked who will perish.

To truly prosper is to be truly blessed by knowing and enjoying Christ. This is a blessing worth believing in and hoping in. Christ will not disappoint, while the wicked will face great disappointment. So let us not envy the wicked, but enjoy the Savior.