

Theology Proper – Bad Things, Good People (Week 3)

We're coming to the end of our time of study on the topic of why Bad Things happen to Good People and I hope you're walking away challenged, encouraged and equipped to grapple with this difficult questions yourself but also to leverage your knowledge with others as this is an incredibly common questions posed by unbelievers as to why they choose not to repent and believe.

Just to recap our previous two weeks again:

1. First was God's intent for unrepentant people



Revelation 20:11–15

15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.



The complete holiness of God requires the eternal torment of an entirely sinful mankind. He saves those who repent but the rest experience the torture of being sinful forever.

2. Second was God's intent for repentant people



Romans 8:28

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.



no actual bad befalls the good people of God.

3. Lastly we'll look at the repentant's response to God

- a. Thankfulness
- b. Holiness
- c. Evangelism

I choose these 3 areas not because they are comprehensive but because they are most personally practical in light of what we've covered and the context we've been in while studying through Acts.

Underlying these three areas of focus is the overarching response of the redeemed toward their redeemer, obedience from the heart. Of all the things Christians will and are to do in light of their outrageous redemption and rescue from the fires of God's wrath against their sin it all boils back to this. We obey.



Romans 6:17–18

17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,

18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

We do not obey to be saved, we do not obey to stay saved, we obey because we are saved. It is a fruit not the seed or the soil or the sun. It is the product of that which God has chosen by grace through faith to work in us. The Lord opens our eyes to the truth of our dreadful condition. We repent and have our hearts washed clean by the Holy Spirit and now the rest of life is lived in an obedience from the heart to the truth of God. This obedience is not burdensome but rather delightful. It is our desire not drudgery. Our flesh will fail us, we will sin, but never again from the heart.



For the Christian, life turns from a terrifying expectation of judgment to a delightful exercise of obedience and a hope of eternal reward.

Thankfulness

The fallen condition of man is disgusting. We forget that sometimes. We think Christians are prudish, sensitive and intolerant but it is the wicked heart of fallen man that is depraved. Do not take part, cut the vile things out of your life and where once the muck and mire of the world was or would have been fill it with thankfulness.



Ephesians 5:3–8

3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;

4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

7 Therefore do not be partakers with them;

8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

Why thankfulness? Why not!? You've been saved from the eternal fiery torment you deserved and plucked out by an Almighty God who loves you and has an eternity of delight prepared for you. Shame on us for our lethargy in thanksgiving. Shame on me for my arguing and complaining, my bitterness and anger, my filthiness, silly talk and coarse jesting. We of all people very clearly should be the most thankful, rejoicing, ecstatic beings in the universe. Mercy and love when we deserved death and judgement.

Life is hard, our flesh is weak, but let's strive together to encourage one another towards thanksgiving and building into ourselves a default disposition towards thankfulness and the giving of thanks.

In our home we like to play a game with our kids simply called "The Thankful Game". When someone starts to argue, complain or whine we say something to the effect of, "it sounds like we need to play The Thankful Game". It can hurt in the moment as it should, shame over our sin of distrust and unbelief in the goodness and sovereignty of God in our circumstances but I tell you the vileness of the world cannot survive long in the soil of a thankful heart.

Holiness

The second response of a human who has been forgiven which I have been struck by is their call to holiness.



1 Peter 1:13–19

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,

15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth;

18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,

19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

The call of the Christian to be holy is astounding. From the flames of eternal torment to the imitation of the likeness of God in his holiness. We often get discouraged by this verse despairing of our sinfulness and just how far short we come to any God tier level of holiness.

To understand this verse or this call in that way though is to misunderstand the call. We are called in Christ, through his blood, through redemption unto holiness. This is not a call to achieve or attain to holiness it is a call to live in the holiness we already have in Christ.

This is what it really means practically what we were talking about last week that the greatest good for the Christian is to be conformed into the image of Christ. We are growing up into what we already are, filling the holy shoes we already have because of our redemption in Christ.

This verse is devastating and discouraging if our call to it must draw from the dry, shallow well of our own efforts and merits. However if our abilities lie in the nature of Christ we can be holy as Christ is holy because we are holy as Christ is holy.

Think about it. You don't get into heaven unless you're holy, sinless, perfect. You and I know we're not, yet in Christ we are. And so, out of that incredible resource we draw to actually live earthly lives of increasing holiness out of thankful obedience and actual ability to say no to what is vile and yes to what is righteous.

Evangelism



2 Timothy 4:1–8

1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

The final response I have been struck by, and this one most deeply in light of all our study in Acts, is evangelism. Think of it for a moment in strictly human terms that narrow chance which brought me to repentance, faith and redemption. My parents faithfully, consistently, diligently, patiently, accurately shared the gospel with me. What about you for those who's delight is in the Lord? What narrow set of circumstance brought you to faith? What if you had been born into a different family, a different

place, a false religion. God's mercy spreads wide and in so many various and wonderful ways but if Acts or our own experience is teaching us anything it's that the gospel goes forth through the lives of believers.

In light of all we know of the wrath of God bent to press us unto eternal torment and his mercy to open to us a way of salvation in Christ what are we doing not prioritizing in our lives the sharing of the gospel with unbelievers? Now hear me carefully there are many ways to facilitate this as a priority in our lives. From funding missions and evangelism, to teaching and compelling and building up others to go, to praying and encouraging, to actually going and being the frontline workers, but are you thinking about it? Do you know where in the pipeline you fit?



Romans 10:13–15

13 for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."

14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

For most of my life I believed God was calling me to be a missionary or evangelist but right now where he has me my place in this pipeline of preaching and evangelizing is to fund others so they can keep the gospel before unbelievers, it's in teaching and praying to compel you my friends to go. Someday my situation may change but the point is that we need to think about it, to know and have peace before God with how we are planning to prioritize gospel presentation.

And even as the beautiful feet I still have a responsibility to actually speak and share the gospel with those in my immediate sphere of influence. My kids, neighbors, coworkers and you all! I do not want to get to the throne room of Heaven as the books are opened and have any of you, as your name is found missing to look over at me and say "Why? Why did you not tell me about this day? Why did you not tell me about the fire? Why did we just speak of filthiness and silly talk, and coarse jesting? You knew about this and you didn't tell me?" And what about you? Your friends, your coworkers, your family members, your neighbors and the unbelievers in your life? Are you sharing the gospel? Are you planning and preparing to have eternally significant conversations with them? Are you praying for them and yourselves for opportunities? Are you praying for your believing friends and encouraging them to share their faith? I implore do so and may God have mercy on the souls around you as he has had mercy on your soul.

Bonus Point

One additional though in no way inferior point is hinted at in that last verse:



2 Timothy 4:8

8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Do not consider lightly the great reward being stored up for the believer in direct proportion to their efforts on earth. We are not working for our salvation we are working out our salvation and in that we are laying up for ourselves greater and greater eternal rewards.



James 1:12

12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.



2 Corinthians 5:10

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.



Matthew 6:19–21

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

20 "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.



Galatians 6:8–10

8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

So then, in conclusion, wrapping up all that we've considered over the past three weeks:

- a. Have you repented? If not please do. Do not be a fool and toss yourself into an unnecessary eternal torment.
- b. As a Christian are you viewing rightly the difficulties of your life in light of your salvation and the God who is working all things together for your good?
- c. As a Christian are you taking seriously your joyful responsibility of obedience in:
 - a. **Thankfulness.** Rejoicing in your salvation and keeping your undeserved position in Christ top of mind and allowing it to flavor all the rest of your life with it's sweetness and freedom.
 - b. **Holiness.** Casting off the filth of this world and striving to please your Redeemer in righteousness and purity rising up into the identity of Christ which is yours in Christ.
 - c. **Evangelism.** Planning, preparing, purposing to aim your life towards the distribution of the gospel amidst lost souls. Expending every resource to see others given accurate access to an eternal life freely offered yet entirely undeserved.
- d. Finally are you eager, anticipating and working hard for your heavenly reward? Life is short, eternity is long, which one do you think is more worth investing in and living for?



For the Christian, life turns from a terrifying expectation of judgment to a delightful exercise of obedience and a hope of eternal reward.