

Do Bad Things Really Happen?

They say, whoever "they" may be, that a good question is one to which it is not easy to give a good answer. Are questions to which there is no good answer at all, then, even better questions? I am not sure.

To the question as to how bad things happen if God is good, there are at least two answers; and it might seem to some that neither is a good answer, for neither answer is comprehensive so as to represent the whole truth.

The first answer is that bad things do not actually happen. For all is well, that ends well. Shakespeare not only wrote that, but made it the title of a whole play he wrote; and I believe it makes sense to all of us. All is well that ends well.

In Holy Scripture God makes His promise quite clear, that for those who are His own, He will make all things well, and even that all the seemingly bad things that happen in the world, and in our individual lives, all serve to preserve His Christians in the faith, to rescue us from our inherent ungodliness and unbelief, so that we shall not suffer for ever in His judgement, but rather live and be with Him. "For those who love God all things work together for good," as He has had His holy Apostle Paul write it, "for those who are called according to His purpose."

With that, He also makes it clear that those who are His own are that only on account of His goodness, and not of ourselves: those who love Him are those whom He has called according to His purpose, so that they responded to His calling in faith.

On the other hand, Holy Scripture also teaches that bad things do happen, things displeasing to God. Among them is sinners doing bad things. Nevertheless, even the evil doings of evil people serve His purpose. Chief examples of this would be the betrayal of Judas, and the miscarriage of justice perpetrated by Pontius Pilate. Through these evil doings the eternal purpose of God was brought about: the salvation of sinners.

Holy Scripture also teaches that there are those who will not be won over by the love of God, and who therefore will have to suffer for ever in Hell; and although this is good and right, because they blasphemed against the greatest love of all, it is in no way pleasing to Him who suffered also for their salvation. And as to why He allows it, Holy Scripture gives no answer; apparently it is not for us to know. What is for us to know, though, is that He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, also graciously will give us all things with Him - as He has also had His Apostle write it; and for those who hear this, and take it to heart, well, in the end, nothing else matters.