

# Why Bad Things Happen to God's People

Student Guides

### Daily Bible Reading

Day 1	2 Cor. 12: 1-7
Day 2	2 Cor. 12: 1-7
Day 3	2 Cor. 12: 8-21
Day 4	2 Cor. 12: 8-21
Day 5	2 Cor. 12: 1-21
Day 6	2 Cor. 12: 1-21
Day 7	2 Cor. 12: 1-21

*At some point, every person faces the mysteries which caused Job to lose it all. Is God really the God of justice? If so, why do bad things happen to good people? And to make things apparently worse, why does God allow bad things to happen to His people if He loves them so much?*

*Paul faced this question not just on a theoretical level, as one sitting comfortably in a classroom setting discussing good vs. evil, but on an experiential level virtually every day, as he served the God of the Bible. We learned some of Paul's perils and plights in chapter 11 as he rehearsed many of them. Chapter 12 continues with Paul's perils while revealing, in part, their purpose. We will learn valuable lessons concerning the role of bad things in the believer's life.*

## 1. The Dangers of a Privilege (vv. 1-6)

Paul has just listed many bad things he faced. Now he balances the bad with a blessing (vv. 2-6). On the surface, it looks as if the Apostle is speaking of someone else who has had an “unspeakable” vision. But as we read further, it becomes clearer Paul is describing a revelation he himself had experienced.

*First, Paul recalls where he was raptured (v. 1).* In short, Paul saw heaven! Paul was raptured to the “third heaven” which he equates with “paradise.” It is a reminder of the original purity of Eden, the perfect Garden of God (Gen. 1-2).

*Second, Paul notes what was revealed.* He received “revelations” (i.e., things unveiled). However, he was careful to distinguish the things God revealed to him which were “unspeakable.” At other times God spoke to him, it was clear that his duty was to speak what God revealed to him everywhere he went.

## 2. The Discipline of a Problem (v. 7)

As we can see, Paul's plights were offset by the high privilege of visions and revelations, even being “caught up” to the “third heaven.” Even so, there is a price for receiving revelations from God. Those who receive them are particularly vulnerable to inflated egos, spiritual pride, and viewing themselves for valuable to Kingdom work than other faithful servants of God. Paul was no exception. He, therefore, explains the Divine disciplinary process (v. 7).

*First, Paul reveals the severity of spiritual discipline.* He speaks of a “thorn in the flesh.” The thorn was not given to Paul because he was sinning against God. To the contrary, the thorn was given to keep him from sinning against God.

*Second, Paul reveals the source of spiritual discipline.* Here we come face to face with the mystery of suffering. No easy solution exists as we think about it. The reality is, an all-loving, all-powerful God is able to use bad things to accomplish good purposes (Job 2:7; Rom. 8:28). It is not that God creates the bad; instead it is that God uses the bad. There is a huge difference.

### 3. The Delight of a Promise (vv. 8-21)

In the end, the “thorn in the flesh” drives the child of God to depend on the promises God has given (v. 8).

*First, Paul made his request to God (v. 8). Problems drive us to pray. Difficulties are never sent from God to make us bitter, but to make us better. Paul prayed to escape the problem. Escape is a natural reaction to pain. We desire to simply have the pain go away. Asking God take the pain away was Paul’s initial reaction. God does not always grant the requests for pain to be taken away.*

*Second, we see God’s response to Paul’s request (vv. 9-10). One purpose in prayer is not to get what we want. Instead it is to find out what God wants. Paul records that God spoke to him in his hour of need. God answered. He just did not answer the way Paul requested. Instead, God solved Paul’s problem. Paul needed grace, not relief from pain.*

*Finally, we see Paul embracing his responsibility as an Apostle (vv. 11-21). In fulfilling his apostolic role, he was coming a third time to them but he still would, as his practice had been, refuse any support they offered (v. 14). He desired to only offer himself (v. 15), and work for reconciliation between all warring parties (vv. 16-18). Paul held no resentment for the persecution he endured from their hands.*

Nothing could keep the Apostle from the responsibilities his Lord gave him. He loved the church and he loved the Lord Jesus even more.

#### Wrap Up

*Why do bad things happen to God’s people? From the Apostle Paul we learn the dangers of Kingdom privileges. Serving God and being faithful to Him does not bring a cozy, comfortable life. Instead, we find Kingdom living is risky living. Even more, when spiritual truths are revealed to us, sometimes we are disciplined lest we become spiritually sick with egomania and self-centered living. God knows how to balance our lives, however. He always gives grace — sufficient grace — in our hour of need.*