

MORNING DEVOTIONS

Why Is God Punishing Me?

A few times in my working life I've had somebody ask me this intriguing question, "Why is God punishing me? I must be a terrible sinner". It's the sort of question I dread hearing because it implies that person is feeling a lot of inner pain and anger.

And yet it gets asked – maybe you've said it yourself:

- *What have I done to make God mad at me?*
- *Why has he turned against me?*
- *Why is God punishing me?*

I heard of a young man called Don who was a churchgoer, but he was going through a very difficult time. He spoke to his pastor – he was quite distressed. "I was fired from my dream job," he said. "My fiancée broke off our engagement. And my friends don't want to have anything to do with me. Why is God punishing me?"

He was coming from a place of deep despair and confusion. The only explanation he could find was that God was punishing him for something he had done wrong. He must have offended the Almighty. But it's not as simple as that. Perhaps some of the blame lies within us, and the way we treat others. Instead of focusing on our own mistakes, we blame God. We may not want to own up to our own failure.

It is not helpful to think of God in this way. The Bible doesn't present God as the Divine Being setting out to punish you. He is not a ruthless judge waiting in heaven for people to do bad things to punish them. I guess you have said, "Why me, God?" because something has happened that caused you to feel somehow singled out.

Perhaps you feel that God must be punishing you for some reason. Why else would this be happening to you? Be assured. You are not alone. God has not abandoned you and He has not singled you out, no matter how you feel right now. Whatever you are going through, God's promise is that He will see you through and give you the strength and direction you need.

God wants you to know that He understands how you feel; that He knows more about your situation than you do, and that He saw it coming before you did. Above all, He began to work on His resolution for you before you even knew to ask! The reality here is that God is for you. He is not against you.

The Bible tells us that God does good things for bad people and allows bad things to happen to good people (Matthew 5:45). Nothing demonstrates this more than Jesus dying on the cross. Jesus is the perfectly good person who had the ultimate evil done to Him. The evil was that a totally perfect man was unjustly executed on a cross (Luke 23:40-43). God allowed this evil thing to happen to bring about a greater good (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Bible presents God as a loving Father who loves his children. The Bible tells us that if God does love us, He will discipline us (Hebrews 12:7). This will mean that things will happen to Christians that they don't like. But God does this for their good, not because He is angry and wants to punish them. For Christians, Jesus has taken their punishment away, so that they will never be punished (Romans 5:8-9).

God has said that we can trust Him in everything. He has also told us that He will cause good to come out of every situation for those who love Him (Romans 8:28). When we ask, "Why me, God" it's really because we don't believe God. Our belief system opposes God, so we feel singled out and victimised. When we choose to believe and trust God that there will always be a good outcome, we are trusting Him!

Only God knows why we are going through these circumstances. I think a better way is to say to Him, "God, this is going to be an interesting journey. I'm excited to see how you are going to bring good out of this one. I trust You will!" We are not in control. God is in control, and nothing happens apart from Him. Nothing changes except it proceeds from Him.

In Genesis we read how God created all things, set them in their place, gave them direction, and set them into motion in perfect harmony and balance. No matter how many free-will decisions are made every second, everything remains in God's balance. Life isn't always fair in our eyes, but God is always fair. We are not victims in this life. We are unconditionally and passionately loved by our Father God. He is not looking for ways to punish you.

Perhaps when we are feeling distressed and we ask, "Why me?" His answer might be, "Trust Me, I love you. I am working everything out for your good!"