

Can I Trust God?

When we are prosperous healthy and happy and our family and friends are doing well, the idea of trusting God sounds logical. We take His blessings for granted, after all aren't we good people? But when a loved one dies; or when we suffer a terrible loss or some injustice; when we see some of the horrible things that happen in this world, we think: "Isn't God all-powerful? If He is really all powerful and all wise, he could have kept this from happening". "How can this be? Why does God allow it to happen?"

When faced with a difficult problem the two best things to do are, first to pray for wisdom and guidance, and second to look in the scriptures for answers. Fortunately Christ gives us an answer to this difficult question in the following parable from Matthew. 13:24-30

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while people slept, his enemy came and sowed weeds also among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit, then the weeds appeared also. The servants of the householder came and said to him, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where did these weeds come from?'

He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'

The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and gather them up?'

But he said, 'No, lest perhaps while you gather up the weeds, you root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the harvest time I will tell the reapers. First, gather up the weeds, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.'

Christ is talking about farmers, what does this parable have to do with our question? Why does God not destroy all the wicked, 'right now'? Christ explains this parable in the following verses.

Matthew 13:37b-42 He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the children of the Kingdom; and the weeds are the children of the evil one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. As therefore the weeds are gathered up and burned with fire; so will it be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will gather out of his Kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and those who do iniquity, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun

in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

If God were to destroy this wicked world, "right now", some who need to turn back to him would not be saved. And those who have yet to be born would miss their chance at life and salvation. So God does allow bad things to happen. He can see the flower growing in the garbage dump. He knows the past, present and future.

Remember, God is beyond time, God can use tiny events to direct what happens. He is just and fair and kind. Remember, we are spirits embodied in these bodies, God does not look at death and pain like we do. Instead of just staying remotely up in heaven, God sent part of himself to come to earth, become human and suffer like we do. Christ suffered for us, died, rose from the dead, and now he sits up in heaven at God's right hand to intercede for us.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

God keeps track of us all the time. He even keeps track of the number of hairs on our head (Matthew 10:30). He neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121:2-4). He watches over us and will not allow us to be tempted more that we can bear.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Think about what that verse really says. God knows all about us, inside and out, all the time. How can he tell when the temptation is too much for us, if he doesn't keep track of our innermost thoughts? He is not a God is far off, but a God who is near. He knows what we are going to say before we say it.

Psalm 139:1-4 LORD, you have searched me, and you know me. You know my sitting down and my rising up. You perceive my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but, behold, LORD, you know it altogether.

Not only does he keep track of us, but he has provided a guide for us to help us through life. When Christ was preparing the disciples for his departure, he said that he would not leave them helpless, but would provide a Counselor to guide them. This Counselor is the Holy Spirit that we Christians have dwelling in us.

John 14:16-17 I will pray to the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, that he may be with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the

world can't receive; for it doesn't see him, neither knows him. You know him, for he lives with you, and will be in you.

God works our every detail of our life for our long term good, our successes and our triumphs, our failures and disappointments, everything that happens to us. His Holy Spirit dwells in us and guides us, helps us and protects us. We don't understand many things, but we can place our trust in God, who works all things for our good, if we follow him.

Romans 8:26-29 In the same way, the Spirit also helps our weaknesses, for we don't know how to pray as we ought. But the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which can't be uttered. He who searches the hearts knows what is on the Spirit's mind, because he makes intercession for the saints according to God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

Notice that he didn't say that all things work for good to everyone, they work for good to those who love God. How can I tell if I love God? One clear test is that if we love him, we will keep his commandments.

John 14:15 If you love me, keep my commandments.

Instead of wasting our trials problems and temptations, God uses trials, problems and temptations to strengthen us, to refine us, to discipline us.

Proverbs 3:11-12 My son, don't despise the LORD's discipline, neither be weary of his reproof: for whom the LORD loves, he reproveth; even as a father reproveth the son in whom he delights. Like a strong man running a race, rejoice when you have opposition, it makes you stronger.

James 1:2-3 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various temptations, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

When problems or persecutions occur, Christians don't need to panic or be in despair, instead they just keep on keeping-on.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

When persecutions occur, rejoice and look forward to the reward God's faithful servants will receive. When you are playing football and carrying the ball you get tackled. When you sit on the bench and don't do anything, you don't get tackled. Getting tackled hurts. If you are trying to serve God and He allows the evil one to hurt you or tempt you, rejoice, it means that you are doing a good job, otherwise

Satan wouldn't bother with you.

Matthew 5:10-12 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when people reproach you, persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

We can be confident in any situation for our God, the creator of the universe, is greater than all the gods of this world. He is able to deliver us.

1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world.

When you consider the rewards offered to Christians, it makes it worth pushing on through all of our trials, troubles and pain to the finish line. Our reward which is eternal will make our temporary afflictions seem light and trivial.

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 Therefore we don't faint, but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we don't look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Sometimes we disagree with the way God is running things. My first wife died of a terrible disease, muscular dystrophy, and I really didn't like what happened. God could have healed her, but instead he used death to deliver her from a painful life. Now she is rejoicing in heaven.

Isaiah 40:31 But those who wait for the LORD will renew their strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run, and not be weary. They will walk, and not faint.

Death can be a release to those who are suffering.

Isaiah 57:1-2 The righteous perishes, and no man lays it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil. He enters into peace; they rest in their beds, each one who walks in his uprightness.

When things happen that we don't like or understand it is all right to say "Why?" to God so long as we remember to remain humble. Job and Jeremiah complained. King David, a man after God's own heart asked God "Why do evil

men prosper?"

Psalm 10:1-5 Why do you stand far off, LORD? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? In arrogance, the wicked hunt down the weak. They are caught in the schemes that they devise. For the wicked boasts of his heart's cravings. He blesses the greedy, and condemns the LORD. The wicked, in the pride of his face, has no room in his thoughts for God. His ways are prosperous at all times. He is haughty, and your laws are far from his sight. As for all his adversaries, he sneers at them.

King David tells us what we should do when God allows the "bad guys" to win: Don't fret, don't be envious, delight in God, do good, trust God, rest in God, wait patiently for God, cease from anger and forsake wrath. Not getting angry when provoked is hard for all of us, myself included. If you have a problem with anger, please read the FAQ "Should I Get Angry?"

Psalm 37:1-8 Don't fret because of evildoers, neither be envious against those who work unrighteousness. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither like the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good. Dwell in the land, and enjoy safe pasture. Also delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD. Trust also in him, and he will do this: he will make your righteousness go forth as the light, and your justice as the noon day sun. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him. Don't fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who makes wicked plots happen. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath. Don't fret, it leads only to evildoing.

Later David says more on the topic. When God allows the "bad guys" to win for a while it may appear that being good doesn't pay. But remember that God is not bound by time like we are. To him a day can be as a thousand years or a thousand years as a day (1 Peter 3:8). The Bible concludes with the book of Revelation whose theme is: don't worry, in the long run good will be rewarded and evil will be punished.

Psalm 73:13-19 Surely in vain I have cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocence, For all day long have I been plagued, and punished every morning. If I had said, I will speak thus; behold, I would have betrayed the generation of your children. When I tried to understand this, it was too painful for me; Until I entered God's sanctuary, and considered their latter end. Surely you set them in slippery places. You throw them down to destruction. How they are suddenly destroyed! They are completely swept away with terrors.

When you think of a being who can create and keep track of this complex universe and yet who knows the number of hairs on each of our heads, realize

that God is far beyond our puny understanding. Remember that he cares for us, but don't expect to understand him.

Isaiah 55:6-9 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call you on him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways', says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

God is wise, He knows our troubles, He knows what to do about them, He cares for us his children and He is able to help us.

1 Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your worries on him, because he cares for you.

God, the creator of the universe cares about us. We can quit worrying and trust him, even in the presence of tornados, wars, earthquakes, tsunamis, persecution, etc.

Psalms 46:1-3 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

When conditions were terrible in ancient Israel, Habakkuk trusted God to work it all out. That is what we need to do.

Habakkuk 3:17-18a For though the fig tree doesn't flourish, nor fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive fails, the fields yield no food; the flocks are cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the LORD. I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! the LORD. The LORD is my strength. He makes my feet like deer's feet, and enables me to go in high places.

Because of the wickedness in our world God allows things to happen that we don't understand. Innocent children are abused, poor people are exploited, natural and man made disasters happen. Bad things happen to good people. We don't know why. But we do know that God cares about us, that He is strong, that He is wise, that He is faithful and like the song says: "Behind a frowning Providence, He hides a smiling face". So when terrible things happen, we need to humbly trust God and to pray for help and guidance and be faithful to him no matter what happens.

Proverbs 3:5-8 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Don't be wise in your own eyes. Fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It will be health to your body, and nourishment to your bones.

Even though our life in this world may be lousy, in the long run it will be well with us. We must stay faithful to God, even when what He is allowing to happen doesn't make sense. Remember

Romans 8:28, All things work together for good to those who love the Lord.

Even though we stay faithful to God, we may not see our prayers answered in this life, we may have to wait till the next life.

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 Therefore we don't faint, but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory;

Conclusion

We can trust God. If we sincerely follow Christ, all will be well with us in the long run. Let's close this FAQ with Peter's quotation on how to live which he took from the 34th Psalm.

1 Peter 3:10-12

***"He who would love life, and see good days,
let him keep his tongue from evil,
and his lips from speaking deceit.
Let him turn away from evil, and do good.
Let him seek peace, and pursue it.
For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and his ears open to their prayer;
but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."***

Make God your choice, seek Him!