

The Brown Street Beacon

"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,

holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)



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Does Everything Happen for a Reason?

I recently heard of a young man who has had a lifelong dream to play for Iowa's college football team. He recently received a scholarship to the college, but he has since been diagnosed with cancer and has been told that it is highly unlikely that he will ever put on a uniform for the football team. Being a religious young man, his response was, "everything happens for a reason." While one has to appreciate the good attitude of such a young man, and while I pray that he survives this terrible ordeal that has invaded his life, is his conclusion correct? Does everything happen for a reason?

Many religious people believe that God has mapped out the life of every person, or at least every person who claims to be a Christian. Thus, whatever happens to us, whether good or bad, is a part of God's master plan. That is certainly a comforting belief in times of trouble. The problem, though, is that it is just not true. The Bible doesn't teach that everything happens for a reason. Now don't misunderstand me. The Bible does teach the providence of God. Thus, there may be a reason for some of the bad things that happen to us, even though at the time we may not know what it is. This was certainly the case with Joseph when he was thrown in a pit by his brothers and then later was incarcerated in Egypt. We know now that those trials that Joseph experienced were for the purpose of saving the people of God (Genesis 45:4-8), but Joseph could not have immediately known that. So then, sometimes God has a purpose that He is working out in our lives through the avenue of trials and tribulation. However, such is not always the case.

There are some things that happen in life by chance. This truth does not contradict the sovereignty of God. It was God who decided how things would operate in this world, and He decided to create a world that is governed by natural laws. This is God's will and God's right for He is sovereign. So then, we live in a world of cause and effect, action and reaction, and reaping and sowing. If we somehow violate these laws, the consequences are often grave and suffering is experienced. It is not because we are evil and have sinned. It is not because we are good. In fact, in many of these situations, there is no moral significance at all. For example, a three year old boy carelessly rides his tricycle into the street and gets hit by a car. Who sinned? Someone says it must be God punishing the boy's parent. No, that's nonsense. The accident happened because the child lost control of the tricycle and speed and momentum carried him into the street. It wasn't an act of God. It wasn't Satan's work. It was simply an accident, and the fact that the boy rode into the street at the exact time that a car was coming was nothing more than chance. This is a concept that some religious

people cannot grasp, but it is scriptural. Not everything that happens to you is God's direct will. Not everything that happens is a part of God's master plan for your life. Some things happen by chance.

I might point out here that nothing happens without the permissive will of God. However, His permissive will and His direct will are two different matters. God permits things to happen without getting directly involved. Why doesn't God involve Himself in every act that transpires? He doesn't because in His infinite knowledge, He knew it wasn't the best way for the world to operate. Really, the only other choice would have been to create man without a free will, making us like robots, having our every move dictated to us. Do you wish you were so created?

Now, does the Bible really teach that some things happen by mere chance? Yes it does. Consider these passages.

Ecclesiastes 9:11

I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all.

Luke 10:31

31 "And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

No, everything doesn't happen for a reason. Still, as the people of God, we can find great comfort in the fact that no matter what does happen in life, we can find help from our God in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Don

THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL

Author Unknown

The apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians confronted three enemies of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were personal favoritism, hypocrisy, and the words of the Law of Moses. Twice he uses the terminology, "the truth of the gospel" (2:5,14) and twice he simply calls it "the truth" (3:1; 5:7) to emphasize that which is erroneous was being taught as if was the truth of the gospel of Christ. Paul opened this letter with this warning which he repeated, "but even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (1:8,9).

The truth of the gospel does not involve favoring anyone or any group of people over another. The gospel is for Jew and Gentile, that is, the truth is proclaimed to all who will hear it, from the least to the greatest (Gal. 2:6-10).

The truth of the gospel is to be free of hypocrisy. The apostle Peter was called upon to treat all people the same. Unfortunately, he was hypocritical, treating the Gentiles who had become Christians differently than the Jews who had become Christians. The apostle Paul had to stand against Peter in

this matter and call him to repentance (2:11-14).

The truth of the gospel does not teach or require what the Law of Moses did. The gospel of Christ proclaimed justification by faith and not by the works of the Law. Paul wrote, “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ...” (2:15-21).

Today, using the gospel of truth, one group proclaims a doctrine while another teaches a conflicting doctrine. Paul is warning us to test the messages we hear with the gospel of truth that was taught and written down for us to know and obey. Paul admonished, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth...?” (3:1).

The truth of the gospel sets us free and offers us liberty in Christ. We walk by the guidance of the Spirit through the words of truth written for our salvation!