

The Work of God

Have you ever wondered what God is doing or why God allows certain things to happen? There are so many things in life that seem utterly senseless. Why did God allow that person to die who showed so much promise? Why did God prolong the life of that other person who has done so much evil? Why did God allow that opportunity to fall through, or that war to happen, or that disaster to take place? What is the sense in it all?

It is true that we do know some things about God's will. The Bible tells us that God is gathering a peculiar people for Himself out of every tribe and nation. We know that one day Jesus will return. We know that one day there will be the Millennial Kingdom, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the Eternal State. We know these things because God has revealed them to us.

But in our own everyday lives there is so much that just seems senseless. Sometimes we may eventually come across a reason, but other times it never makes any sense. It seems especially odd when you stop and consider that all events are orchestrated by God. The Lord guides the hearts of kings, raises up nations and tears them down, guides history, works all things together for good, and has even preordained good works for us that we should walk in them. History is not random a collection of random events that have happened to random people. It is all part of a grand tapestry of events that are woven together by God. So why does the tapestry seem so random and senseless?

There's a simple answer to this: it's because God doesn't want us to find out what He's up to. I'll even go ahead and spoil the ending: God is doing this to make us live by faith. If we knew why every event happened then faith would not be necessary. By hiding His purposes God tests His children to see if they will trust Him when disaster strikes and when life does not make sense. Do we really believe in a loving God, or will we abandon our faith in God the moment something happens that we don't understand?

But to get back to the subject at hand: the book of Ecclesiastes tells us that God has hidden His purposes from mankind:

Ecclesiastes 3:10-11: "I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that **no man can find out the work that God maketh** from the beginning to the end."

Do you see that last line there? We are told that *no man* can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end. In other words, it is impossible to know the full extent of what God is doing because He has hidden it from mankind. That idea is repeated a few chapters later:

Ecclesiastes 8:16-17: "When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:) Then I beheld all the work of God, that **a man cannot find out** the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea farther; though a wise man think to know it, **yet shall he not be able to find it.**"

This is something that we instinctively know is true, and yet it's jarring to see it in print. When God does things He does not send us an email to explain why He has done them. Sometimes we see things working together and get a glimmer of understanding, but other times we never find out why

something happened. Even when we think we have some understanding of events it is impossible to uncover the complete tapestry of history. As the passage above says, even if a man tries to figure it out he will not find it; a wise man might think that he knows it but he won't find it out either. God has taken His plans and cloaked them in obscurity.

Think of it this way: even when we think we know what's going on, do we really have all the facts? Can we see the entirety of history? Can we see all events and understand how each piece fits in with all the others? Without complete knowledge, all we have is an incomplete picture that can be very misleading. It's entirely possible that things we think are very important are actually not important at all, and things that seem minor are actually history-changing milestones. There is simply no way to know. There are so many factors that we can't see – and the factors that we don't see may have tremendous importance.

There is a point to all of this. There will be times in our life when it seems that events simply have no meaning. People's faith is often destroyed when some terrible disaster happens (such as the death of a loved one) and they then assume that the disaster means there is no God. There are others who are stuck in terrible circumstances and who don't see a reason behind it. Their suffering seems so pointless and arbitrary. Why doesn't God rescue them? Does He not see? Does He not care? God, after all, has all power and wisdom. Why would an all-powerful and loving God put someone in such a terrible situation?

The key here is that there is much more going on than what we can see. Our suffering is not pointless; it is necessary. We may not understand why, but God does, and God sees all and knows all. What God wants us to do is trust Him. When disaster strikes we need to trust God, who sees what we cannot see and who knows what we do not know. We need to stop thinking that we understand what is going on and start trusting the One who really does know everything. We need to live by faith, which is the whole point. God is glorified when we trust Him in spite of our circumstances and in spite of what we can see.

Life, in a very real sense, is a test of faith. When we don't understand why things are happening and when everything seems senseless, are we willing to step back and trust God? Are we willing to admit that we don't have all knowledge and trust the One Who does? Or will we instead foolishly claim to know exactly what is going on and curse God for being arbitrary and cruel?

One day God may reveal to us the panorama of history and explain how it all fits together. Until that day comes we need to hold on and have faith, for without faith it is impossible to please God.