

Why Do Bad Things Happen to Christians?



Foreword

Few questions cut as close to the bone as this one. A believer who has trusted Christ, sought to walk in obedience, and prayed for protection can still lose a child, face a diagnosis, suffer betrayal, or live under persecution. The question is not abstract. It is asked in hospital rooms, at gravesides, and in the quiet after the news that life will never be the same.

This essay does not pretend that every tear has a tidy explanation. Scripture itself refuses that comfort. Job never received a full account of why his world collapsed. Jesus wept at Lazarus's tomb even though He was about to raise him. **The Christian answer is not that suffering is an illusion or that God is distant. It is that God is sovereign, the world is fallen, human freedom is real, and the church lives in an age that still hates the One it crucified.** The last word is not the wound. It is the risen Christ who will wipe every tear.

Context

The Bible begins with a world declared “**very good**” (**Genesis 1:31**). There is no death, no thorn, no shame. That world did not last. Genesis 3 records the first human choice against God. From that point forward, Scripture never treats pain as an accident or as God's original design. It treats it as the consequence of rebellion that now runs through creation, human nature, and history.

Christians do not stand outside that story. They have been transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the Son (**Colossians 1:13**), yet they still live in the same groaning creation (**Romans 8:18–23**). They still inhabit bodies that decay. They still live among people who can choose harm. They still live in a world that, Jesus said, would hate them because it first hated Him (**John 15:18–20**).

The question, then, is not why Christians are exempt. They are not. **The question is how a good and sovereign God relates to the suffering of those He has claimed as His own.**

Question and Answer

Why do bad things happen to Christians?

They happen for several reasons that Scripture ties together rather than reducing them to a single formula.

Because this is a fallen world.

When Adam sinned, death entered through sin, and death spread to all (Romans 5:12). The ground was cursed. Childbearing became painful. Work became toil. Creation itself was “subjected to futility” and now groans (**Genesis 3:16–19; Romans 8:20–22**). Disease, disaster, decay, and death are not random glitches. They are the environment of a world disordered by sin. Christians are redeemed people living in an unredeemed cosmos. **Accepting Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior does not cancel gravity, cancer, or earthquakes.**

Because of original sin.

Original sin does not mean God is punishing you for something Adam did thousands of years ago. It means we are all born with a heart that pulls away from God, and we all live in a world already marked by death and brokenness. Even people who belong to Christ still fight leftover sin (**Romans 7**). Sometimes our pain comes from choices we made. Sometimes it comes from choices other people made. **Sometimes it just comes from living in a world that is no longer the way God first made it.** The teaching does not say, “You deserved this exact hurt.” It does say no one lives in a perfect world or with a perfect heart.

Because human beings have free will.

God did not create puppets. Love that cannot be refused is not love. The same freedom that makes worship, covenant, and courage possible also makes cruelty, neglect, and violence possible. Much of the suffering Christians endure is inflicted by other people: injustice, abandonment, war, slander, abuse. God is not the author of those evils (**James 1:13**). He permits a world in which creatures can choose against Him and against one another. If God took away every chance that someone could hurt another person, He would also take away the kind of world where real people—not programmed machines—**can love, obey, and choose.**

Because the world hates Christ and His followers.

Jesus was explicit: “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you” (**John 15:18**). “In the world you will have tribulation” (**John 16:33**). “All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (**2 Timothy 3:12**). Some suffering is not the general groaning of creation. It is hostility aimed at those who belong to Jesus. The early church learned this in prisons and arenas. Many believers still learn it in families, workplaces, and nations where confession of Christ is costly. **This is not a sign that God has abandoned His people. It is a sign that they are identified with the One the world rejected.**

Because God is sovereign—and He is not the author of evil.

Sovereignty means nothing happens outside God's control. Scripture says He "works all things according to the counsel of his will" (Ephesians 1:11). Satan could not harm Job unless God allowed it (**Job 1–2**). Even the cross was carried out by wicked people, yet it happened according to "the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (**Acts 2:23**). Sovereignty does not mean God enjoys evil or that He is the one who creates sin. It means He is never caught off guard, never knocked off His throne, and never unable to use even wicked acts for the purposes He has chosen.

For Christians, that end is not always visible in the moment. **Romans 8:28** does not say all things *are* good. **It says God works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose**—and that purpose is conformity to the image of His Son (**Romans 8:29**). Suffering can refine faith, produce endurance, expose idols, and make the hope of glory more than a slogan (**James 1:2–4; 1 Peter 1:6–7; Romans 5:3–5**). Sometimes the purpose remains hidden until the resurrection. Job never learned the heavenly counsel that opened his book. **He learned that God was God, and that was enough to stand.**

These explanations can all be true at once. They do not cancel each other out. A Christian may be hurting because the world is broken, because someone chose to do wrong, and because belonging to Jesus draws hatred. God does not cause the evil. He is present while it happens. **In Christ, He has entered our pain, and He suffers with His people as the wound is being inflicted—not as a distant manager of outcomes, but as the God who weeps, bleeds, and stays.**

Conclusion

Christians are not pulled out of a broken world the moment they believe. They still live on the far side of Eden. People around them can still choose to wound. Their bodies still wear out. And this age still hates the Christ they follow. Conversion does not erase original sin's effects, human freedom, the curse on creation, or the world's hostility.

None of that knocks God off His throne. He does not author evil, yet nothing happens outside His rule. He allowed the cross itself. While evil is happening, He is not far away. In Christ, **He has entered the pain, and He suffers with His people as the blow falls.**

Romans 8:28 does not say every wound is good. It says God works in all things for those who love Him, shaping them to look like Christ.

The last word is not the hospital bed, the grave, or the courtroom. It is the risen Lord who has already overcome the world, and the coming day when God will wipe away every tear and death will be gone. Until that day, the church holds this: the pain is real; it is not the end; and nothing can separate those who belong to Christ from the love of God.

