



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

The Right Question

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Why do bad things happen to good people? How can a loving God send people to hell? Why didn't God save my friend/neighbor/family member/spouse? These are questions that are sometimes asked by sincere and well-meaning people. Perhaps you've heard such questions? Maybe you've even asked such things yourself.

You may not ever have considered it, but these are all bad questions. They are not just a little bit bad. These are atrocious questions – horrible questions. They are the wrong questions to ask.

Recently I've been reading a book entitled John Calvin For a New Reformation.

This is a collection of chapters written by various well-known Reformation scholars and edited by Derek Thomas and John Tweeddale. In an excellent chapter on God's Providence, Burk Parsons says this: *"When we understand the genesis of the problem of evil, we will cease asking the Lord why so much evil exists. Having been confronted by our own guilt and shame before our holy and righteous Lord, we should realize the foolishness of the commonly uttered assertion, 'If God is a good God, he would not allow so much evil to exist.' Instead, we would begin to ask the more appropriate questions: If God is a just God, why doesn't more evil exist? Why is there not more sin, death, and destruction on this earth? Why do we not struggle more than we do? Do we not justly deserve to experience more pain and misery in this world of sin? We will cease asking the nagging question that Rabbi*

Kushner had the audacity to put before us, namely, Why do bad things happen to good people? And we will begin asking the more appropriate question: Why do good things happen to bad people?"

According to Parsons, such questions as these are inappropriate questions – they should not be asked. Instead, we should pursue "more appropriate questions." As I've pondered the point he's raising, it seems to me that we often ask the wrong questions. For instance, in the

midst of suffering, we sometimes wonder, "Why is God doing this to me? What have I done to deserve this?" A better and more appropriate question might be, "Why has God been so good to me and shown me such mercy and kindness?"

The problems with

these wrong questions are numerous. They often begin from faulty assumptions. They are presuppositionally flawed questions. Take Rabbi Kushner's question: Why do bad things happen to good people? Can you spot the faulty assumption? It is the words "good people." Jesus says in Mark 10:18 that there is no one who is good except God. Psalm 14:3 states "There is no one who does good, not even one." A bad assumption often makes for a bad question.

Another problem woven into such inappropriate questions is their basic orientation. For instance, "How can a

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Mnemonics...

- 2/8 Session Meeting
- 2/11 Bowling and Pizza Party
- 2/19 Men's & Boys Breakfast
- 2/25-2/26 Presbytery Men's Retreat

HAVE heard tell of a man who did not know a capital "A" from a bull's foot, and I know a good many who certainly could not tell what capital "A" or small "a" either may mean; but some of these people are not the most ignorant in the world for all that. For instance, they know a cow's head from its tail, and one of the election gentlemen said lately that the candidate from London did not know that. They know that turnips do not grow on trees, and they can tell an overgrown radish from a beet root, and a rabbit from a hare; there are flame folk who play on pianos who hardly know; as much as that. If they cannot read, they can plow, mow, reap, sow, and bring up seven children on ten shillings a week, and yet pay their way; and there's a sight of people who are much too ignorant to do that. Ignorance of spelling books is very bad, but ignore hard work is worse. Wisdom does not always speak Latin. People laugh at smocks, and indeed they are about as ugly garments as could well be contrived, but some who wear them are not half such fools as people take them for. If no ignorant people ate bread but those who wear hobnail shoes, corn would be a fine deal cheaper. Wisdom in a poor man is like a diamond set in lead, for none but good judges can discover its value. Wisdom walls often in patched clothes, and then folks do not admire her. But I say, never mind the coat, give me the man: shells are nothing, the kernel is everything. You need not go to Pirbright to find ignoramuses; there are heaps of them near St. Paul's.

I would have everybody able to ready to read, write, and cipher (indeed, I don't think a man can know too much); but the knowing of these things is not education. There are millions reading and writing people who are as ignorant as neighbor Norton's calf, that did not know its own mother. That is as plain as the nose on your face, if you only think a little. To know how to read and write is like having tools to work, but if you don't use these tools, and your eyes, and your ears, too, you will be none the better off. Everybody should know what most concerns him find makes him most used. If cats can catch mice find hens lay egged know the things which most suits what they were made for. It is little use for a horse to know how to fly; it will do well enough if it can trot. A man on a farm ought to learn all that belongs to farming, a blacksmith should study a horse's foot, a dairymaid should be well up on skimming the milk and making the butter, and a laborers wife should be a good scholar in the sciences of boiling and baking, washing and mending. John Ploughman ventures to say that those men and women who have not learn the duties of their callings are very ignorant people, even if they can tell the Greek name for a crocodile or write a poem on a black beetle. It is too often very true:

"Jack has been to school—
To learn to be a fool."

When a man falls into the water, to know how to swim will be of more use to him than all his mathematics and yet how very few boys learn swimming! Girls are taught dancing and French when stitching and English would be a hundred per cent more use to them. When men have to earn their livings in these hard times, a good trade and industrious habits will serve their turn a world better than all the classics in Cambridge and Oxford; but who nowadays advocates practical training at our schools? Schoolmasters would go into fits if they were asked to teach poor people's boys to hoe potatoes and plant cauliflowers, and yet school boards would be doing a power of good if they did something of the sort. If you want a dog to be a pointer or a setter, you train him accordingly—why ever don't they do the same; with men? It ought to be, "Every man for his business, and every man master of his business." Let Jack and Tom learn geography by all means, but don't forget to teach them how to black their own boots and put a button on their own trousers; and as for Jane and Sally, let them sing and play the music if they like, but not till they can darn a stocking and make a shirt. When they mend up that Education Act, I hope they will put in a clause to teach children practical common sense home duties as well as the three R's. But there, what's the use of talking this way, for if children are to learn common sense, where are we to get the teachers? Very fee people have any of it to spare, and those who have are never likely to take to school keeping. Lots of girls learn nothing except the folderol which I think they call accomplishments. There's poor Gent with six girls and about fifty pounds a year to keep his family on, and yet not one of them can do a hand's turn, because their mother would go into fits lest Miss Sophia Elfrida should have chapped hands through washing the family linen, or lest Alexandria Theodora should spoil her complexion in picking a few gooseberries for a pudding. Its enough to make a cat laugh to hear the poor things talk about fashion and etiquette when they are not half as well off as the haggler's daughters down the lane, who earn their living and are laying money by against the time when some young farmer will pick them up. Trust me, he who marries these hoity-toity young ladies will have as bad a bargain as if he married a wax doll. How the fat should be in; the fire if Mrs. Gent heard me say it, but I do say it for all that—she and her girls are *ignorant*, *very ignorant*, because they do not know what would be of most service to them.

Continued on next page...

Every minnow nowadays calls itself a whale: every donkey thinks itself fit to be one of the Queen's horses; every candle reckons itself the sun. But when a man with his best coat on, a paper collar, a glass in his eyes, a brass chain on his waistcoat, a cane in his hand, and emptiness in his head fancies that people cannot see through his swaggers and brags, he must be *ignorant, very ignorant*, for he not know himself. Dandies, dressed up to the top of the fashion, think themselves somebodies, but nobody else does. Dancing masters and tailors may rig up a fop, but they cannot make a nothing into a man. you may color a millstone as much as you like, but you cannot improve it into a cheese.

Round our part we have a lot of poets, at least a set of *very ignorant* people who think they are; and these folks bother me more than a little because I have written a book and, therefore, ought to listen to their rigmaroles. Nonsense is nonsense whether it rhymes or not, just as bad halfpennies are good for nothing whether they jingle or lie quiet. "Here John," said a man to me. "I want to read you some of my verses." "No, thank your said I, "I don't feel in a poetical frame of mind today." Mark you, I won't feel a bit more so tomorrow. What right has that fellow to shoot his rubbish at my door? I have enough of my own. I don't intend to have my ear stuffed up with cobblers wax or cobbled verses. I had a double dose the other morning from two of our great village poets, and I must confess it was rather better than most of the rhymes that I meet with in books. Chubbins said,

"It is a sin
to steal a pin."

And then Padley topped it up by adding,

"It is a greater
to steal a tater."

Now, there's rhyme and reason for you, as the sexton said when he wrote three lines for the poor man's tombstone:

"Here I lie,
Killed by a sky-rocket
in my eye."

When tradesmen put their earnings into companies and expect to see it again, or when they lend money at outrageous interest and think to make their fortunes by it, they must be *ignorant, very ignorant*. They might as well hang a wooden kettle over the fire to boil the water for tea or sow beans in river and look for a fine crop.

When men believe in lawyers and money lenders, borrow money to speculate, and think themselves lucky fellows, they are *shamefully ignorant*. The very gander on the common would not make such a stupid of himself, for he knows when anyone tries to pluck him, and won't lose his feathers and then pride himself in the operation.

The man who spends his money with the bartender, and thinks that the landlord's bows and "How do ye do, my good fellow." Mean respect, is a perfect natural: for with them it is:

If you have money, take a seat;
If you have none, take to your feet.

The fox admires the cheese; if it were not for that he would not care a rap for the raven. The bait is not put into the trap to feed the mouse, but to catch him. We don't light a fire for the herring's comfort, but to roast him for our own eating. Men do not keep taverns for the local laborers' good; if they do, they certainly miss their aim. Why, then, should people drink "for the good of the house"? If I spend money for the good of the house, let it be my own and not the landlord's. It's a bad well into which you must put water; and the beer hall is a bad friend, because it takes your all and leaves you nothing but headaches. He who calls "friends" those who let him sit and drink by the hour, is *ignorant, very ignorant*. Why, red lions, tigers, eagles, and vultures are all creatures of prey, ant none but fools put themselves within the power of their jaws talons.

He who believes that either Whigs or Tories will let us off with light taxes must have been born on the day after the last of March; and he who imagines that county boards and local districts will ever be free from corruption must have been educated in an idiot asylum. He who believes in promises made at elections has long ears and may try to eat thistles. Mr. Plausible has been around asking all the working men for their votes, and he will do all sorts of good things for them. Will he? Yes, the day after tomorrow a little later than never. Poor men who expect the "friends of the working man" to do anything for them must be *ignorant, very ignorant*. When they get their seats, of course they cannot stand up for their principles except when it is to their own interest to do so.

Pizza & Game Night

Date: Friday February 11th
 Pizza and Games from 6pm-??? at the church
 Cost for Pizza: \$5 per eater
 Invite a friend!



John Ploughman Concluded...

To lend umbrellas and look to have them sent home, to do a man a good turn and expect another from him when you want it, to dream; of stopping some women's tongues, to try to please everybody, to hope to hear gossips speak well of you, or to reckon upon getting the truth of a story from common report are all evidences of great ignorance. Those who know the world best trust it least: those who trust it at all are not wise. You might as well trust a horse's heel or a dog's tooth! Trusting to others ruins many. He who leaves his business to bailiffs and servants and believes that it will be well me must be *ignorant, very ignorant*. The mouse knows when the cat is out of the house, and servants know when the master is away. No sooner is the eye of the master gone than the hand of the workman slackens; at least, it is so nine times out of ten. "I'll go myself," and "I'll see to it," are two good servants on a farm. Those who lie in bed and bolster themselves up with the notion that their trade will carry on itself are *ignorant, very ignorant*.

Those that drink and live riotously, and wonder why their faces are so blotchy and their pockets so bare, would quit wondering if they had two grains of wisdom. Those who go to the tavern for happiness climb a tree to find filth. We might put all their wit in an eggshell, or they would never be such dupes as to hunt after comfort where it is no more to be fond than a cow in at crow's nest. But, alas good-for-nothings are common as mice in a hay stack. I only wish we could pack them off to Lubber-land, where they have half-a-crown a day for sleeping. If someone could let those fellows see the sure result of ill-living, perhaps they might reform. Still I done know, for they do see it and yet go on all the same, like a moth that bums its winged in the flame but dashes into the candle again. Certainly for loitering luses to expect to thrive by keeping their hands in their pockets or their noses in pewter pots proves them to be *ignorant, very ignorant*.

When I see a young lady with a flower garden on her roof and a dressmaker's shop on her body, tossing her head about as though she thought everybody was charmed with her must be ignorant, very ignorant. Sensible men don't marry a wardrobe or a bonnet; they want a woman of sense, and women of that kind always dress sensibly, not gaudily.

To my mind, those who sneer at religion and set themselves up to be too knowing to believe in the Bible are shallow fellows. They generally use big words and bluster a great deal, but if they fancy they can overturn the faith of thinking people who have tried and proved the power of the grace of God, they must be *ignorant, very ignorant*. He who looks at the sunrise and the sunset mind does not see the footprints of God must be inwardly more blind than a mole, and only fit to live underground. God seems to talk to me in every primrose and daisy, to smile upon me from every star, to whisper to me in every breath of morning air, and to call aloud to me in every storm. It is strange that so many educated gentlemen see God nowhere, while John the plowman feels Him everywhere. John has no wish to change places, for the sense of God's presence is his comfort and joy. They say that man is the god of the dog: those men must be worse than dogs who will not listen to the voice of God, for a dog obeys its master's whistle. They call themselves "philosophers," don't they? Their proper name is fools, for the fool hath said in his heart, "There is no God." The sheep know when rain is coming, the swallows foresee the winter, and even the pigs, they say, can see the wind; how much worse than a brute must he be who lives-where God is everywhere present and yet sees him not! Thus it is very clear that a man may be; a great hand at learning and yet be *ignorant, very ignorant*.

February Birthdays

Monika Doro	1 st
Dan TenPas	3 rd
Gail Buyze	14 th
Emily Will	25 th
Jim Onnink	25 th
Penny Harden	26 th
Arenda Onnink	28 th



“If you wish to know God, you must know his Word. If you wish to perceive his power, you must see how he works by his Word. If you wish to know his purpose before it comes to pass, you can only discover it by his Word.”

- Charles Spurgeon





Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

February 2022



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 Session Meeting	9	10	11 Pizza & Game Night	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19 Men & Boys Breakfast
20	21	22	23	24	25 Presbytery Men's Retreat	26 Presbytery Men's Retreat
27 Lord's Supper	28					

Items from the January 2022 Session Meeting.

1. Christian De Jong was approved to attend the 2022 Timothy Conference in Escondido CA., April 22-23.
2. Joshua Arndt, Connor Froh, Joseph Mamazza, Rodney Nyhof, and Jason Will were certified for election as trustees at the 2022 Corporation meeting.
3. The Bowling with Pastor and the Taco Game night will be combined and be a Pizza and game night on February 11, 2022, at church.
4. There will be a planning meeting for the 2022 Social Fellowship activities soon.

Actions taken at the 2022 Congregational Meeting.

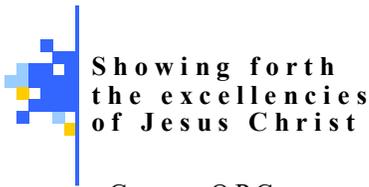
Timothy Voskuil was nominated and elected for a three-year term as Elder.

The 2022 General Fund Budget was adopted.

The 2022 Missions and Benevolent Fund Budget was adopted.

Actions taken at the 2022 Corporation Meeting.

1. Joshua Arndt, Connor Froh, Joseph Mamazza, Rodney Nyhof, and Jason Will were elected as trustees for 2022.
2. The 2022 Capital Budget was adopted.



Showing forth
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Spurgeon

Corner “To him be glory both now and forever.” 2 Peter 3:18

Heaven will be full of the ceaseless praises of Jesus. Eternity! thine unnumbered years shall speed their everlasting course, but forever and forever, “to him be glory.” Is he not a “Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek?” “To him be glory.” Is he not king forever?—King of kings and Lord of lords, the everlasting Father? “To him be glory forever.” Never shall his praises cease. That which was bought with blood deserves to last while immortality endures. The glory of the cross must never be eclipsed; the lustre of the grave and of the resurrection must never be dimmed. O Jesus! thou shalt be praised forever. Long as immortal spirits live—long as the Father’s throne endures—forever, forever, unto thee shall be glory. Believer, you are anticipating the time when you shall join the saints above in ascribing all glory to Jesus; but are you glorifying him *now*? The apostle’s words are, “To him be glory both now and forever.” Will you not this day make it your prayer? “Lord, help me to glorify thee; I am poor; help me to glorify thee by contentment; I am sick; help me to give thee honour by patience; I have talents; help me to extol thee by spending them for thee; I have time; Lord, help me to redeem it, that I may serve thee; I have a heart to feel; Lord, let that heart feel no love but thine, and glow with no flame but affection for thee; I have a head to think; Lord, help me to think *of* thee and *for* thee; thou hast put me in this world for something; Lord, show me what that is, and help me to work out my life-purpose: I cannot do much; but as the widow put in her two mites, which were all her living, so, Lord, I cast my time and eternity too into thy treasury; I am all thine; take me, and enable me to glorify thee *now*, in all that I say, in all that I do, and with all that I have.”

Morning, February, 15th C. H. Spurgeon

loving God send people to hell?” is oriented toward a perceived injustice. Relatively innocent people are routinely being sent to hell by this supposedly “loving” God. What is called into question is God’s justice in condemning anybody to eternal damnation. Such a judicial act is viewed as cruel and hateful rather than kind and loving.

Better questions would run along different lines with different orientations. How can a loving God bring guilty sinners to heaven? Could a just God simply ignore the guilt of sinners and cancel their punishment by looking the other way?

On a more personal level, it is better to ask, “How could God take a sinner like me to His heaven?” than “How could God send so-and-so to

hell?” Good questions always magnify the grace and mercy of God, marveling that our God is infinitely kind and good to undeserving people like ourselves.