

John 13:18-30 – “The Mystery of Evil and God’s Heart”

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Intro: Why bad things happen to good people is really no mystery for those of us who have read and believed our Bibles. Far more puzzling to us is why *good* things happen to *bad* people! If God is sovereign, why does He tolerate those who are evil? Why does He cause the rain to fall on the fields of the evil as well as the just? Why does anything good happen to those who spit in His face? Tonight we’re going to examine the Mystery of Evil and the Heart of God and find that...

Proposition: God ordains evil as part of His good plan, though its cost causes His heart pain. Tonight we’ll attempt to see the heart of God as well as His sovereignty.

Our thoughts will be organized under three heading: (vv.18-20) Prophecy; (vv.21-27) Pain; (vv.28-30) Permission.

(vv.18-20) Prophecy – Jesus turned His attention from the eleven disciples who would heed His call to servanthood and revealed the truth about His one disciple who would not – Judas. **John 13:18 - 18** *I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’* Judas was a friend who ate bread at Jesus’ table. To share the host’s table was a mark of friendship, honor and good will on the part of the host. To betray that friendship was the highest treachery on the part of a guest. Notice that Jesus knew whom He had chosen. He knew Judas as a man with the heart of a conman (cf. John 6:70). Jesus knew Judas’ heart from the beginning and had chosen him for the part Judas would play of his own free will at the moment of betrayal that was now at hand. For three and a half years Jesus had treated Judas with nothing but friendship, so much so that Jesus’ other disciples would have no clue that Judas would be the betrayer. All of this was by God’s plan for proving to the eleven that Jesus was the “I am he,” that came from God – Messiah sent from God, who was in fact God. **John 13:19 - 19** *I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.* Who but God can reveal the future? Who but Jesus can fulfill all the prophecies concerning the one sent from God? This revelation was necessary so that the eleven would realize that they were sent into the world by God to win men to God. **John 13:20 - 20** *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”*

[DOCTRINAL POINT] God ordains evil as part of His good plan for man’s salvation.

(vv.21-26) Pain – Nevertheless, there is a cost for God’s use of evil for His good purpose – pain is inevitable. **John 13:21 - 21** *After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”* We are told that Jesus was troubled in His spirit by the fact that one of His friends would betray Him. The word for

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“troubled” is used three times in John (cf. 11:33; 12:27; and here). In John 11:33 we are told that Jesus was greatly troubled in His spirit at Lazarus’ tomb. Again, He was troubled in His soul, we are told, when a delegation of Greeks sought Him out during passion week. Here in this verse we find Him again troubled in spirit. The word for “troubled” used each time speaks of a deep anger, almost a rage going on in the depths of His soul. Who was He angry with? Certainly not Lazarus or his sisters. Surely not with the Greeks who came to seek Him out. Nor, I would suggest was He angry at Judas. No. He was angry at sin and Satan for in each instance sin was separating Him from someone or something that He loved. Here is the mystery of evil and God’s heart: God uses evil as part of His plan, but He hates with a pure passion the disaster sin causes in those He loves. Note well God’s heart: **Ezekiel 33:11 - 11** *Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?* **2 Peter 3:9 - 9** *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.* There is a mystery to the intersection of God’s sovereignty and His heart. We cannot understand all about this, but what we can know is that He does nothing unnecessary in His saving of His people. If He uses evil even at the cost of causing pain to His own heart, it is because there is no better way. (vv.22-26) Jesus was not the only one who experienced pain. His disciples were greatly troubled as well. Notice their uncertainty and self-doubt in verses 22 **John 13:22 - 22** *The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. Peter and John asked Him, “Lord, who is it?” and He answered them with a sign: “Whomever I give the bread to, that’s the one.”* **John 13:26 - 26** *Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. The giving of bread by the host to a guest was an offer of friendship and honor, and the receiving of bread by the guest was a pledge of loyalty. Jesus symbolically was offering Judas one last chance to change his mind – one last chance to repent and believe. Perhaps in the meeting of their eyes everything became clear to Judas – he had been found out. He didn’t care. The conman in him took the bread without repentance, knowing he would betray his friend.*

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Though God uses evil, it causes pain in His heart.

(vv.27-30) Permission – Judas’ final rejection of Christ’s friendship sealed his fate. At that moment, he became completely possessed by Satan: **John 13:27 - 27** *Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.”* Jesus then commanded Judas/Satan, What you are going to do, do as quickly as possible. Satan can do nothing without God’s permission. Evil is completely under the authority of God, though God is not its author. (vv.28-29) The other disciples, save John, were completely confused

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about what was going on: **John 13:28–29** - **28** *Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. 29* *Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor.* Judas’ con job had been so well played for three and a half years that even his closest friends had been taken in. (v.30) Judas went out, *“and it was night.”* **John 13:30** - **30** *So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.* He went out of the presence of the Light and eternally into the presence of darkness. He had made his choice and his destiny was sealed.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Satan can do nothing without God’s permission, but oh! What a cost to the souls of those who fall under his sway!

[APPLICATION] James M. Boice gives us three thought provoking applications:

1. Fallen man needs more than an example; he needs regeneration. Think for a moment of the example of love, righteousness and grace that Judas had for three and a half years. Judas had followed Jesus thorough His ministry years. He had seen Him heal hopeless cases of blindness, leprosy, deafness and even raise the dead. He knew Jesus possessed power. Judas’ hands had passed out the multiplied bread and fish; he had been sent out with the other disciples to preach in Jesus’ name and had come back with the others rejoicing that, *“Even the spirits are subject to us in your name”* (Luke 10:17). Judas had heard Jesus deliver powerful messages that changed the lives of some who were listening. He had watched as Jesus cleansed the temple court of moneychangers and merchants. He witnessed Jesus boldness in the face of growing official hostility. In short, no one ever had a better example of courage, power, wisdom, faithfulness and love before his eyes than Judas Iscariot. But that witness was not enough to overcome the fallen heart within the man. No one can be saved by the power of an example: salvation only comes through regeneration of the spirit by God’s power. Why, we might wonder, doesn’t God do this for everyone? The Biblical answer is clear: He does not give life when anyone is not willing to welcome life. God’s grace is marvelous, but it comes to us through persuasion, not compulsion. Anyone who, like Judas goes into a Christless eternity does so because of his own refusal to repent. How important it is, dear ones, to pray for God’s regenerating power to open the hearts of those who need the Savior!

2. Some of God’s people look so much like weeds and some of Satan’s people look so much like wheat that we cannot tell the difference. In Matthew 13:24-30 Jesus told a parable about a man who sowed good seed in his field. In the story, though the farmer sowed good seed, an enemy had come in the night and sowed bad seed, weeds, in the field. When it was discovered that both the wheat and the weeds were growing in the same field, the farmer’s laborers asked if they should go out and pull up the weeds, but the famer would not let them. **Matthew 13:30** - **30** *Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather*

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the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned but gather the wheat into my barn.” The point of the parable is that you and I cannot tell who are God’s elect and who are not. Judas deceived everyone but Jesus about his true condition. You and I might despair of some whom we will meet in heaven, and praise others to the skies that will be found in hell. Wait for the time. When Jesus comes all things will be revealed. Our posture, then, should be like that of Jesus: offer friendship and spiritual help to everyone until Christ makes clear who are His.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ is incredibly patient with those who are perishing. Think of the patience of Jesus with Judas. For three and a half years, Jesus treated Judas with such kindness and friendship that even their closest associates, the disciples, were shocked when Judas was exposed as a conman. Jesus’ friendship toward Judas was offered in the hope that Judas, even at the last minute, might repent and be saved. We say to ourselves, “But Jesus chose him because he was a conman!” That is true. How can we resolve the fact that Jesus knew Judas would betray Him, yet continued to extend His hand of friendship to him? There is a mystery to it that you and I cannot fathom, but this much is clear: God is incredibly patient with those who are perishing, and the responsibility for their eventual lostness is on them, not on God who continues to offer the olive branch of grace until their condition is hopeless. If Jesus is this patient with sinners, we also ought to be patient with sinners. This too, is the call to servanthood in Jesus’ name.

Conclusion: Why do good things happen to bad people? The ultimate answer is because God is good. He loves even the ones who reject His friendship. He will by no means overlook their guilt, if they will not receive His overture of grace, but as we’ve seen tonight, He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Aren’t you glad He was patient in your case? Why don’t we join Him as He loves others who still need His grace?