

## **WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: FACTOR TWO**

### **We Reap What We Sow – The Consequence/Foundational Premise**

The point of balance in God's moral universe which we must now confront is the most difficult one for a fallen person in a fallen world. This ethical counterpoint now directs the finger of blame squarely at the individual who is suffering and says, "It is your fault; not God's, not Adam's, not your parents,' but yours!" The Bible tells us repeatedly that God holds people personally responsible for their behavior. It reveals three primary methods by which He ensures that we experience the consequences of what we do: human government, divine providence and individual conscience; using each for the fulfillment of this most basic of ethical principles, namely, *we reap what we sow!* This righteous governance manifests itself both positively and negatively. In ruling His moral universe, God will see to it that good behavior is rewarded and evil conduct is punished. In applying this axiom to the issue of suffering, it means that there will be times in our lives when our adversities are self-imposed. We have no one to blame for them but ourselves. In such cases, the answer to "why me?" consists of "because you!"

The most obvious manner in which God puts this precept into practice is through the institution of human government. Today, many are critical of governing authority and rightly so. Sometimes governments can be inefficient or corrupt, or both. When they are, they fail to function as they should in maintaining law and order, administering justice and placing a horizontal restraint upon evil. Nevertheless, human government as a concept is a good gift from God, and has been designed by Him to function in a positive way for the benefit of the human race (Romans 13:1-7). If you have any doubt about that, just try to imagine what it would be like living in a society where there is no government. In its place, society would consist of a Darwinian free-for-all. Chaos and evil would rule and reign. It would indeed be a dystopian "hell on earth."

The second method of moral governance is not so obvious, since it takes place providentially. Providence is a term describing God at work invisibly in the circumstances of everyday life, in a manner that fulfills His plan and purpose (Ephesians 1:11). How does Providence relate to reaping what we sow? If human government fails to administer a reward for good behavior or a punishment for evil in one's life, God will orchestrate events in such a way so as to overcome that failure. Most of us acknowledge this as true, in assertions such as "the worm has turned" or "what goes around comes around." Many non-Christians have recently become fond of using the Hindu concept of "karma," in an attempt to explain God's providence at work in this manner. These expressions are the result of people interpreting specific events, whether positive or negative, as circumstantial payback for good or evil behavior, confirmed in the Word of God in passages such as Romans 12:19 or 2 Timothy 4:14.

Last but not least, we encounter the reap/sow dynamic at work in the realm of conscience. Some of the most intense suffering a person will ever undergo occurs when they are plagued by a guilty conscience. In contrast, we enjoy life at its best when our hearts and minds are free from any sense of guilt. This dual function of conscience is present in every human being (Romans 2:14-16). There is an innate sense of right and wrong built into each of us. It too is a good gift of God, an integral part of our ethical make-up, as those who have been created in His image. When our conscience is functioning properly, it becomes God's instrument for impacting each of us with reward and punishment, in the most intimate and personal way imaginable.