

GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD

When hard things happen in our lives and the lives of those we love, we sometimes wonder how a loving God can allow them to happen. Joseph suffered many hard things in his life—hatred, jealousy, abandonment, false accusation and prison. Let's read about his response to these events, and also some ideas on how the Lord is continually leading us toward good things.

Reading From the Word:

Joseph said to them [his brothers], "So not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them (Genesis 50:20).

Nothing at all could harm people whom the Lord is protecting, not even if the whole of hell were surrounding them, both from without and from within (*Arcana Coelestia* 968).

In every present moment the Lord foresees evil, and provides good; and this He does from the first thread of life even to eternity (*Arcana Coelestia* 9296).

A person cannot be conjoined with the Lord (and so be reformed, regenerated, and saved) unless the person is permitted to act in freedom according to reason, for it is this that makes a person human (see *Divine Providence* 123:4).

There are not laws of permission per se or apart from the laws of Divine providence. Rather they are the same laws. When we say, therefore, that God permits, we do not mean that He wills, but that for the sake of the goal, which is salvation, He cannot prevent (*Divine Providence* 234).

Those who trust in the Divine are altogether different. Though concerned about the morrow, yet are they unconcerned, in that they are not anxious, let alone worried, when they give thought to the morrow. They remain even-tempered whether or not they realize desires, and they do not grieve over loss; they are content with their lot.... They know that for those who trust in the Divine all things are moving toward an everlasting state of happiness, and that no matter what happens at any time to them, it contributes to that state (*Arcana Coelestia* 8478:3).

Possible Questions for Discussion

1. As an older man, what was Joseph's response to the evil deeds of his brothers?
2. How does the Lord protect us from evil?
3. If the Lord can foresee evil things, why doesn't He prevent them?
4. What would happen if the Lord intervened and prevented you from making a really bad choice in your life? How would this affect your chances of going to heaven?
5. When evil things happen, what does the Lord do about them in our lives?
6. The laws of Divine Providence govern things that the Lord wills. What laws govern things that the Lord does not will? How do these relate to each other?
7. What are some of the signs that we can observe in people who trust in the Lord? (see *Arcana Coelestia* 8478:3) Make a list of the qualities of a person who trusts in the Lord.

Optional: Look up Psalm 1. Two contrasting types of people are described here. Write a list of images associated with each type of person.