

9-3-23 Summer Break (Breaking from Bad Theology)

John 9:1-3; Genesis 50:20

Catastrophes happen. As Christians, we need to be careful when assessing the cause of tragedy. It is natural to ask, “Who or what is to blame when tragedy or disaster strikes?”

Job had three friends named Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, they came to Job when he lost everything. God allowed Satan to try Job’s faithfulness to God. Job lost all his children, farm, animals, he was left in ruins. The only thing Job had left was his wife, whose advice was curse God and die.

These friends did do something right. Job’s friends did at least three things right that can be seen in **Job 2:11–13**. First, they came to him when he was suffering. Second, they empathized with him: **“they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads” (verse 12)**. Third, they spent time with him. **Verse 13** states they were with him for seven days before they offered their advice. They commiserated with their friend in silence. They were there for him.

But their silence did not last forever, and these three men gave a series of speeches to Job, recorded in **chapters 4–25**. The speeches of Job’s three friends include many inaccuracies, primarily involving why God allows people to suffer. Their overarching belief was that Job was suffering because he had done something wrong. As a result, they repeatedly encourage Job to admit his wrong and repent so that God would bless him again.

God clearly condemned their advice: **“I am angry with you [Eliphaz] and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me” (Job 42:7)**.

How many have gotten horrible, hurtful, accusatory, and downright wrong unsolicited advice from a friend?

How many have given it? Anyone willing to be honest?

When catastrophes or tragedies strike quite often, we become like the disciples in **John 9** when they met a man blind from birth. Their immediate reaction was that it was the judgment of God upon either this man or his parents. **Read John 9:1-3**. We can’t help but ask how or why?

I. **Unfair/bad things are part of a fallen world.**

- Most of us have all heard the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Their sin moved God to make a series of declarations that transformed part of creation in addition to the pronouncements made to Adam and Eve. Prior to the fall of man, everything on Earth was in harmony. Since the fall, there has been conflict between nature and mankind.

Genesis 3:17-18, And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.” ESV

- The entire earth would feel the effects of the sin of mankind. Before he sinned against God all nature was in harmony. But when Adam sinned, God cursed the earth, and it no longer was the perfect environment man had once enjoyed.

- Many of the natural disasters that we experience are merely the consequence of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.
- The world is full of natural disasters because we live in a fallen world. Sin has polluted our perfect world.
- Just as with Job, many of the things that happen are a consequence of the depravity of mankind.
- I love what Rick said during Sunday school last week, regarding the world falling apart.

II. There are times when bad things/disaster are the result of Man's actions.

- The stewardship of the earth has been given to man.

Genesis 1:28, "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

- In **Leviticus 25:2-8**, the Israelites were instructed to rest the land every seventh year, but they continuously failed to obey God.
- Look at all the man caused disasters throughout history. From Haiti to India, and across the world. Man made disasters are the result of our imperfections and fallen nature.
- Man-made disasters often cost the most in terms of human suffering, loss of life and long-term damage.
- There have been chemical spills, train derailments, pipelines broken and war. Many things that are unintentional, we are imperfect and because of that, we will make big mistakes.

III. There are times when God permits Satan to cause disasters.

- God at times allows Satan to bring disaster into the lives of godly people.

Job 1:9-12, "So Satan answered the Lord and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" 12 And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord."

- Satan was allowed to bring tragedy into the life of Job to refine Job. The attack was not the result of any sin in Job's life. God often will allow Satan to put us through difficulty or crises in order to grow us into conformity to Christ.
- Look at Job's integrity, character, God's view of Job before Satan comes against Job. **(Job 1:1, 8)**
- Look at what Paul had stated regarding Satan and suffering.

Romans 8:28-29, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

2 Corinthians 12:7, “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.”

- Paul speaks of affliction coming from Satan as a refining tool.
- Have you ever considered the things you are facing could be a tool to refine you?

IV. There are times when God sends disaster.

- Sometimes it is hard to understand and trust that God is Sovereign.
- God controls the rain. **Job 5:10**
- God is Sovereign over all nature including the hurricane, floods, and earthquakes. **Nahum 1:3-5**
- There are times God causes natural disasters as a judgment against sin. **Duet. 11:17; Psalm 9:16-17; 2 Chron. 7:22.**
- God sometimes causes disasters as a wakeup call. Sometimes God allows disasters to happen so people will wake-up to their mortality and need for God. Only during these times of dire hopelessness do many people allow God to approach and accept to cause us to remember, repent, and return.

2 Chronicles 15:4 “But in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, and he was found by them.”

- Sometimes God brings calamity into the lives of Christians to wake them up as to how they have distanced themselves from God.

2 Chronicles 7:13-14 “When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

- Often our priorities get out of order. During a time of disaster, we realize that relationships are more important than things. Our relationship to Christ becomes the most important followed by our relationship to others.

Philippians 3:8, “Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.”

- God sometimes causes disasters to give opportunity to spread the Gospel. God commanded the church to spread the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. The disciples remained in Jerusalem. It took persecution to scatter them throughout the world with the message.
- **Read Acts 8:1-4.**

Conclusion

When great persecution arises against the church, how will we respond? When persecution, disaster, trials, problems come against us, what will be our response? When the bottom drops out what will be our response? When nothing makes sense where will we turn? To a bottle, another addiction? When times grow tougher will we run?

What do you think God says about you when Satan points at you? Job was called upright, blameless, one who feared God and shunned evil. Could the same be said about you and me?

Praise God, those of us who are born-again, we are covered by the blood of Jesus, God sees His Son's righteousness and not our sinfulness.

In **Luke 13:1-5**, Christ spoke of two tragedies that took place during His ministry. One involved Galileans who were slaughtered by Pilate, the other eighteen who died in a building collapse. Christ pointed out that these individuals were not any greater sinners than you or I. Calamity and tragedy could strike any one of us at any time. Therefore, we need to be ready by having both our priorities and our relationship to God right.

Genesis 50:20, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."