

Series 2: Character of God - Why do Tragedies Happen?

Question: With having laid the foundations of the understanding that the essence of God's character is Holy, let me ask you this question: How can people who deserve wrath and punishment for the consequences of their sin still question God's goodness?

Ans: by seeing history from the wrong perspective.

We today, are experiencing God's goodness and we are experiencing God's grace – and then we go back to the O.T. We read all the amazing things God did.

- Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt because she looked backwards.
- Look at the story of God saying to destroy every single Amalekite.

** Some people say – can't be the same God as the N.T.

Let us turn to Lev. Chapter 10 - Aaron had two sons. He was proud of his sons – Nadab and Abihew. There were going to be priests. You know what day this was – their ordination day! Read vs. 1

- they messed around. So excited about being a priest and they took some kind of liberty and offered worship that they were not supposed to do. Read vs. 2

Have you ever asked yourself about the flood? Does that not seem like cruel and unusual punishment to you?

** Some people say God is just way too severe. Things just seem to go along and then whack – some people just seem to die or some great judgment happens.

It seems so arbitrary, or whimsical, or capricious. He lets one live and kills another. He does not enforce the death penalty in some cases and yet He does in others.

These two foolish sons of Aaron do some foolish thing and die – yet David commits fornication and premeditated first degree murder and he lives.

**** We need to understand, and this is vital – if you look at the O.T. with the N.T. in view you are going to get confused.

- We live in an aura of the goodness and mercy and grace of God. If you go back with that perspective you are going to get all confused.
- PROBLEM – we feel God is unjust because we are comparing his JUSTICE with His MERCY – NOT His mercy with His LAW.

We have to go back to creation!

- cannot look at the O.T. from the N.T. we have to look at the O.T. FROM THE CREATION

In Genesis 2:17 God said this: Day you eat from tree you shall surely, what? DIE

- when God created He said you sin – you die!
- Rom 6:23 says what – the wages of sin is death.
- Ezekiel 18:4 says, “...the soul who sins will DIE.”
- CREATION – ALL and ANY sin = capital offence.

For any sin God had a right to kill. He made man freely, made man to glorify Him; radiate His image. MAN REBELLED. God gave life, gave conditions, man rebelled – God has every right to take that life back, right.

Question: Adam and Eve ate – did they immediately physically die? NO

- Should they have? **Yes!** So, what happened? God killed an animal to pay for their capital offense (*penal* death). That animal died as their substitute to provisionally forgive them, and they “put on” those skins to clothe their shame and nakedness until the true Lamb of God would come to pay for and take away their sin as in faith they would “put on” Christ’s righteousness (Gal. 3:26-27). They got Grace and Mercy and were not consumed on the spot by God’s holiness, justice and wrath!

**At the moment Adam and Eve sinned God’s mercy was activated – AND do you know what else was activated – the plan of the cross – BECAUSE as soon as God was merciful to sinners someone had to take His JUSTICE because He is Holy (the animal in the Garden was the “type” pointing to Christ (the Antitype)).

**So originally every sin, Stay with me, every sin God was able to require death. Is it unjust for God who freely gave life and gave His decrees to take the life of someone who deliberately rebels against the great goodness of God?

We need to understand this as well – by the time we come to the time of Mosaic law you only have 30 – 35 capital offenses. Not cruelty – amazing reduction in God’s judgment. (God’s severity was relaxed as they got closer to the cross).

- even in the case of the 30-35 capital offenses there are many times when God did not enact His justice (with David, and with Israel again and again. Adultery – divorce was permitted. Idolatry again and again → forgiveness)

**See if we compare the O.T. with the original “creation standard” – the O.T. is full of MERCY.

*****NOW here is the problem – we are so used to mercy and so used to grace. So used to getting away with our sin. So used to not being punished. WE ARE SO ACCUSTOMED to grace that we often ABUSE it.

- Then when God does what is JUST we think He is being UNJUST.
- That is how confused we can be and how we often despise the goodness of God.

He chooses times to enact His justice and some can say they still don’t know why He does.

- We so abuse his grace and mercy now, and if He never put these frequent “memorials” down through history we would be even far worse.
- Periodically God shows us what should happen in order to try and bring us back to our senses. BECAUSE we are so accustomed to His mercy. (God acts in these times to make an example for all to forever see. To set a precedent → this conduct is unacceptable. It will lead to the destruction of civilization.

Turn to 1 Cor. 10:8 and I think this will illustrate this truth for us.

- 23,000 killed in one day
- WHY – vs. 11-12
- So why all the O.T. examples – to show us what should happen to us to warn and steer us away from sin and not tread upon His mercy. WE SHOULD BE SO FULL of THANKSGIVING for the forgiveness of the sin we did today that SHOULD have caused our death and eternal judgment without the cross.

Turn to Luke 13 – this is so graphic. Powerful passage. Read vs. 1 – explain the scenario:

- What did Jesus say to them? Read vs. 2-5 and explain.
- They got justice as an example of what all the rest of them were going to get if they did not repent.

***You see, we are sooo used to mercy, sooo used to grace – that we think JUSTICE is UNJUST.

In closing I believe we are being amiss if our study does not bring us to Who this whole book is about – Our Lord Jesus Christ. The O.T. gave us types and foreshadowing, and portrayed the desperate need for a Saviour, and the N.T. is all about Him revealed as our God, and the only Saviour of men.

Turn to Rom 2:5 – (Read)

- If you refuse God's goodness. If you refuse to be led to repentance by His goodness. If you will not come to thank Him and come to Christ – THEN your hard and unconverted heart is just piling up wrath, and you may be surviving now thinking all is well and there is no judgment for the wrong that I do, but in the Day of WRATH when the fullness of wrath is revealed in the righteous judgment of God on your final day when you die and stand before Him – IT'S going to break lose on you. The ONES who are NOT repenting are piling up a storehouse of sin and judgment laid up little by little. OH WHAT AN ILLUSION – because God is merciful people think it is all going fine. Because they see no consequences for the sins they do they think all is okay – what a DELUSION!
- If the Goodness of God is not leading you towards repentance – THEN DROP by DROP every sin you commit is filling up a reservoir of God's patience – AND it is held together by God's MERCY. But one very real day the dam will break and you will be flooded in wrath and damnation from your own sins.

Read Rom 3:9-18 – Do you consider yourself good? Will you pass the test of righteousness when you stand before the Holy God of this universe?

Jesus said in John 3:36 “...the wrath of God abideth (present tense) on him.”

- Did you know that Jesus speaks more about the wrath of God & judgment than He ever does about heaven.
- only a heartbeat separates the unsaved from an eternity in the Lake of Fire.

** You can never properly understand the Christian faith until you understand that **God is holy**. That’s why He has wrath, and that is why we are under His wrath, because He is Holy, and we are sinful. And that is why the cross of Jesus Christ was so necessary (explain how holiness requires perfection, and Christ was, and the Father made Him sin and could not look at Him because His holiness is pure and He had to have a pure sacrifice to take the place of us and all the sins of those the Father had given Him.)

BUT – JESUS CHRIST – do we see why it was so VITAL that He came and lived perfect and took the punishment you and I so rightfully deserve!

**** No one needs to perish, for God calls to each and every one of us:

Isa. 1:18, ““Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.”

1 Tim. 2:4-6, “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time”

2 Pet. 3:9, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

John 3:16-18, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

John 14:6, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

Acts 4:12, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Matt. 11:28-30, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Rom. 10:9-13, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."