

Dealing with Disaster

Grace Bible Chapel

Special Message – Miscellaneous texts

September 3rd, 2017

Pre-introduction - All week we have been inundated with pictures and information concerning Hurricane Harvey and the devastation of the coastal cities from Texas to Louisiana. The toll of death, and of human suffering is extreme. The Christian observing these events first of all must deal with the reality and purpose in relation to a sovereign God, and then secondly determine personal responsibility in light of the event. This morning I felt compelled to take a one Sunday break from the study in Acts, and provide a quick overview in relation to Christians and how they should understand and respond to disasters.

I have looked at websites & there is - anger, denial, foolishness, unrealistic hype!

Today is the national day of prayer – just called that – thankful, needed!

Disaster – (natural) a sudden misfortunate event – known past as “acts of God”

Introduction:

- Back in 1973 my brother was killed in a tornado in Plainview Texas. It brought the issues we will discuss today to me personally. That event had an impact on my soberness in Christ Jesus – disasters do that.
- Last week to now news is consumed with the physically destructive events of hurricane Harvey. Some of us have loved ones in those areas. Jan & I were constantly on the phone with my youngest son, daughter-in-law & their situation with a less than 2 week old baby in a dangerous area in Sugarland.
 - After the storm hit, & the threat increasing, they made a tough decision to come to SA – had a harrowing experience getting here – spending week.
 - Some here also had loved ones there, but really we were all affected being inundated with pictures & moment by moment information.
 - Jan & I have mentioned, if we did not have TV's with on the spot news around the world, we would have no clue of such tragedies even nearby.
 - If we weren't living in this era of human history, we would not experience all of this – but we are so that we deal with more knowledge of tragic disaster than any generation before us.
 - Because of this, we are emotionally drawn-in, hammered / numb / desiring to help.
 - As we view it we develop ideas, concepts, philosophies of what & why these things are taking place – some are formed by what others say!
 - We (Christians) are the only ones who have any answers – everyone else is struggling to understand, confused, angry, troubled, etc...
- When disasters occur, people often raise questions about God – why does a loving God allow such things? If there is a God is He limited in His ability to keep things like this from happening? How does this fit with ideas of God's love?
 - What our challenge is to form our understanding around basic questions & search the Scripture so that as much as possible we can have the mind of Christ.
- **What or who controls disasters?** Often even theologians state the belief that disasters are not God's will. They site attributes such as holiness (1 Pet. 1:16; Isa. 6:1-7), righteousness (Acts 17:31; Gen. 18:25), goodness (Mark 10:18; Acts 14:7; James 1:7) and especially love (1John 4:8; Eph. 2:4-7) to conclude that these attributes preclude God from being in control of disasters.
 - Some involve arguments about God's directive will as separate from God's permissive will – some say disaster is evil & God is no author of evil (Jms 1:13). I don't see disaster as evil, but as God's right (Rm. 9:21).

- I can emphatically state the attributes of God do not preclude, but do the opposite – even love is enveloped within God’s goodness, righteousness, holiness, etc. – where is it seen? At the cross – He crushed His own Son!

Point: If He crushed His own righteous Son when He became for us evil, than bruising us who are evil is not in any way out of His character.

- (Is. 45:7) - God is sovereign over all affairs of mankind, & therefore the various calamities that come, whether directly from His hand or via His merciful limiting of a disaster sought by Satan, as in Job, nothing happens apart from Him.
- We speak of nature following physical laws, but God’s hand guides everything.
- We can turn to horrific events in Scripture where we are specifically told God acts in judgment – He does so wisely, justly, & righteously:
 - The flood (Gen 6:6-7,11-13,17), destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah (Gen 18:20; 19:24-25) famine, drought, pestilence, plague, war, earthquake (Amos 4:6-12) – all directed intervention of God.
- In (Rom. 1:18) “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” The phrase “is revealed from heaven against all” sums up His activity & right over every person – for we are all under the curse.
- So how do we begin to understand God’s perspective on disasters: (Lam 3:22-23; Ezk 5:11) – KJV- “*It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*” Consumed - Meaning (put to an end, ravaged, exterminated) – no idea why the NASB redirected the meaning.

Point: Those who ask? “What kind of a God does these things?” That’s really not the question. The question is what kind of a God allows a world of rebellious sinners to sin and continue to live & why?

- God controls disaster or we would all be snuffed out long ago!
- **Why do specific disasters occur?** Under the broad umbrella of the curse...
 - There are built-in judgments related to sinful behavior.
 - If you drink alcohol excessively it will kill you.
 - If you choose a lifestyle of illicit behavior a host of diseases can kill you.
 - If you choose to rob – you may be killed at some point by an authority. So under our heading of disasters, we’re not addressing lifestyles.
 - But, the judgments of a hurricane appear to apply across all indiscriminately. While our sense of fair says bad things should only happen to bad people.
- So there are mystery’s concerning what appear as indiscriminate disasters – in the hurricane, why did some lose their life, others are fine, some lost their homes, others are fine – (Deut. 29:29) “the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us.”
 - We are answering a question from Vs. 2.
 - Luke 13:4 – Christ used the Siloam tower falling to correct the thinking of those who had a false sense of fairness, & what was righteous.
 - The problem is that all men are under judgment (John 3:36) “wrath of God.” Under the curse we are positioned for calamity & death – it is natural in this world.
- Job 5:7 – Job hits on the broadness when he states "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." We live in a cursed earth, all under general judgment, in a cursed body by nature antagonistic to God & are dying.

Point: Only the Bible tells us this straight – we are born to die, we are under a terrible judgment of God, we have no hope outside Jesus Christ.

- And it cannot be eliminated in this world, it's just part of it, everything from a flat tire on the hi-way to the death of a friend, everything conceivable hits our lives. That is the curse - a reflection of the fallenness of this world.

- Gen. 3:17b-19a – words “cursed ground, toil, all days, thorns, sweat, till...”
 - Graphic, powerful, real, inclusive – our situation - no hope except in Christ!

- **Why do specific disasters occur?** God chooses the time & place, but...

Point: There are no people who escape the troubles of a cursed earth, there are no places on earth to hide out from disaster, there is no escape from the ultimate reality of trouble & death – this is why disasters occur & will occur until Jesus Christ removes the curse, & He will – that is our great blessed hope!

- **What is their purpose?** We know God has purpose in everything. What does it mean? After all – we know God is all-wise! He never does anything willy nilly – all He purposes is perfect in every exacting detail.

- **What was God's purpose with Job?**

- We know first of all – Job did not know, he was never told! Our situations are the same, no different than Job – we do not know, but like Job we do know we live under a curse, & we know to trust our God – this is what faith is all about!
- Now in studying Job, we have the privilege the inspired writer provides of seeing why God brought such disaster to Job - to test his faith & prove it real, & defy Satan’s accusation – Job set the example of loved & trust in God no matter what.

Point: The exact purpose is not for us to know – but, I know this...it is when they occur that people get sober about life (day of prayer) this in God’s wisdom may be their real sense of purpose – that we might soberly look to God!

- **What do we learn from disasters?**

- Eccle 7:2 – Solomon under inspiration addresses the formation of reality that produces a righteous fear of God, & with it the foundation of wisdoms priority – that is to turn attention to God by faith!

- We learn the fickle transitory nature of living. This earth is a dangerous place to live - there is a 100% mortality rate!
- Visiting the cemetery is a good thing – all who exit this life take absolutely nothing with them – so will you & I take nothing.

Point: When we see people tragically losing their possessions – homes, cars, furniture, etc.. – not to minimize the trauma, but it is only a little picture from God of what yet awaits all of us under the curse – for all must die.

- He is addressing the judgment of God & our attitude concerning it.

- Rom. 2:4-11 – Paul explains God’s patience to those still living, still with opportunity - God has been merciful & given an opportunity to repent.

- Going back to the Siloam tower of Luke 13 Christ stated Vs. 3 - "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." They are called “stiff necked” in the OT.

Point: That's the true disaster. Not that these were killed when the tower fell or died by other means. The real disaster is not repenting (meaning no turning to God in faith), so when death comes there is only a hopeless eternity. The issue is not how people die or when they die or what caused the death. The issue is dying without having Christ as Savior.

Point: Disasters then remind & point us to view what is really important – Christ stated: “what does it profit...soul” (Mat. 16:26). Turn it around another way: “*what difference does it make if a man loses everything if he retains his soul in Christ.*”

- **What should we do when disaster occurs?** A few quick biblical directives:

- First - (James 5:7-8) – “be patient” – makrothumeo which is translated "persevere, be longsuffering," to be able to endure adverse circumstances. How long are we to be patient? “until the coming of the Lord.”
- Peter says in 2 Peter 3:15, "The long suffering, the makrothumeo of God is salvation." If God had a short fuse, guess where we'd all be - in hell. But He is long suffering, long tempered, very patient. And if God can be patient with unholy sinners, then sinners should be patient until a holy God acts on His promises as He surely will. We need to be patient & as Heb. 12:1-2 say “run our race with endurance....fixing our eyes on Jesus.”

Point: So be patient, anticipate the Lord's coming, it won't always be like this.

- Second - IE: Put things in perspective: Jesus said, (John 16:33), "In this world you shall have tribulation...but I have overcome” – we need Christ & in Him we will overcome – all this is temporary.

Illustration of the rope....2 Cor. 4 momentary affliction / contrast / eternal glory. The tiny colored end is your life now, and the lengthy end (not colored) represents eternity.

- Phil 3:20 – “our citizenship is in heaven...eagerly wait for a Savior.”
- Why Christ spoke of “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal” (Mat. 6:19-21), but by contrast store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where...or steal, for where your treasure is (where you place all your effort & affection) there is where your heart will be also.

Point: God thru these disasters is speaking to us – reminding us – showing us the precarious nature of life – all this will collapse, all will fail, Peter says it will all burn up (2 Pet. 3:10). But, Christ’s kingdom is everlasting!

- Third - Be engaged as much as possible: Rom. 12:15– come alongside to comfort & point those suffering back to the only true comfort – Christ Jesus.
- (Gal. 6:10) “while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially those who are of the household of the faith.” This is the reason an offering is being taken at the close of the service – we are to act – be a blessing.
 - Paul devoted chapters 8-9 of 2 Cor to giving to those in desperate need.
- Lastly, but not last in importance - be people of prayer – “the effective prayer.”
- Closing – let me remind you of the real focus, the real promise of God, not something of limited substance on this cursed earth, but something to come in Him that is sure, real (promised of God), glorious, and lasting!
- This is the overcoming hope we need to share, & to encourage!
- John 14:1-3 – is your confidence in Christ. Have you repented and been born again? Then bring up your chin, your Savior is near!