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WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN?

Greetings, exalted ones!

Wow, God again has shown Himself to be Jehovah Jireh in our lives and in our ministry! Through the generous giving of many of you out there, Bruce and I have more than enough for our upcoming trip to India! So, I wanted to take a moment now to thank all of those who have supported us:

First of all, I wanted to thank all of our partners for your faithful, sacrificial and generous giving to this ministry from the first day until now. Your monthly gifts *really* make a difference! So, thank you for your continuous support and for certainly being a part of God's provision for this trip. We appreciate you!

But I also wanted to thank all of you out there who have both recently and specifically supported us on our upcoming trip. Thank you so much for your generous gifts and for partnering with us on this mission trip. I wholeheartedly believe that you are going with us on this trip through being a part of sending us!

I do ask that all of you please partner together with Bruce and I in prayer on this trip between the dates of October 16th and October 31st. Please pray for us both- that we will abide under the shadow of the Almighty in all things and at all times. As you can imagine, there are a lot of moving parts on a trip like this where I will be ministering at least 26 times in 13 days. So, Bruce and I covet your prayers!

As for this month's teaching, I wanted to deal with some recent events that we have experienced in the past month or two: In the wake of the recent tragedies of the flooding in Houston to Hurricane Irma and also the reminder of the terrorist attack of 9/11, I wanted to deal with some of the questions that arise as a result of these terrible things...

You see, everyone wants to know why God allows these bad things to happen, and the problem with this question is that it is based on the incorrect belief system that God is in control of everything and nothing happens on this earth that God did not have His hand in in some way.

I'm here to tell you that this is just not the case. In order for us to truly get the answer to this question, we need to understand that God has set things up here on the earth in a certain way.

You see, in the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, we are told that He created man in His likeness and image and placed him in the garden to have dominion over the works of his hands. Adam was specifically commissioned to "tend and keep (or, guard)" the garden. Then, we know what happened, right? That deceptive serpent came in the garden to seduce Eve and was successful. Therefore, when Adam bit into the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, just as God said would happen, death came on the scene.

You know, people in their ignorance will ask things like - "Why is God allowing all the suffering that is going on in the earth today?" Well, the truth is, God is not the One allowing all of the death, suffering and curse that is in the earth today; the truth is, the first Adam allowed it! Yes, Adam is the reason we see all of the sin and suffering running rampant on the earth. He allowed it by not taking dominion over that old serpent and subduing him like God had commissioned him to do!

You see, what he should have done was the moment that serpent refuted what Eve said about God's command to not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by saying, "You will not surely die," is this: "Alright! That's enough! Not another word serpent! The Lord has given me the authority over this garden to tend and keep it! Therefore, SHUT UP, AND GET OUT!"

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And guess what would have happened if Adam would have done this? All of this curse we see around us - all of the sin, all of the shame, all of the sickness, all of it- would have been dealt with, and we would still have had the opportunity to live in the Paradise of God today!

Some people even incorrectly assume that because they have incurred an accident or a tragedy that this was God's way of preventing something worse down the road. Like for instance, say someone loses a young child, there are those who will say that God must have foreseen some terrible thing that would happen in their future (like say they were going to grow up to depart from Him in sin, so God was "taking" them before that).

Church, this kind of theology is so off base- because for one, what about all the others who will grow up to reject Him? Why didn't God "take" them as well? Also, if God was going to break anyone's back to keep them from some worse tragedy that they would experience in the future, don't you think God would have done that to Adam before he partook of the fruit? I mean, that one act of disobedience propelled all of mankind into a state of sin & death, so why wouldn't God have spared both him and us through putting Adam down?

No, saints, these doctrines are just man's attempt to explain why bad things happen because they believe that if God is God and He can do anything, He must have had a reason why He didn't do anything.

But one thing we need to understand and reconcile in our hearts is that some things are just not going to be able to be explained. No one has all the answers to why bad things happen. So, while we cannot explain everything, there are some things that we can learn from the Scriptures. Therefore, the first answer to this question- "Why do bad things happen?" is:

IT'S NOT GOD

That's right: it's not God. He is not the problem. He is not causing these bad things to happen, nor is He simply allowing them to happen. Now I know that this might be a shocking statement to some of you, but hear me out:

We need to erase that belief system that says that everything that comes into our life must be God's will. No, the truth is that everything that comes into our life is not necessarily God's will for us.

Just think about it: If everything that happens was God's will, then we would have no right to prosecute a rapist. We would have no right to incarcerate someone guilty of sodomy. In fact, we would have no right to convict and condemn anyone because, after all, God must have allowed it to happen because He had some purpose in it.

You could take this one step further as well: we would have no right to try and get rid of sickness through surgery or medicine if God has given us that sickness to teach us something. You see, those who say God has given them this sickness to teach them something are hypocritical in that they then try and go get healed. I mean, let Him teach you if you believe that's why you're sick. Do you see that?

No, the truth is that God does not ordain tragedy, sickness, disease, etc. God is the author of life and life more abundantly; the enemy is the one who comes to steal, kill, and destroy, not God (see John 10:10)!

James actually dealt with this very issue in chapter one of his letter:

James 1:13 says, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone." What James was saying here is that we should never say God is the direct or indirect source of our afflictions. So, to say that God took a life in order to bring some good into other's lives is a direct contradiction to this verse.

James goes on to say what the real problem is: He says in verses 14-15- "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." The real cause for temptations and trials is the evil tendencies that we have in our flesh. In other words, God is never the variable in our trials; we are the real variable! God told the children of Israel that he set before them life and death, blessing and cursing. Then He told them to make the choice!

I believe that so much of our misconstrued theologies are based upon humanistic thinking. Society today teaches us that we are a product of our environment. For example, the world today says that we are the way we are because of some childhood trauma. They teach that our hang-ups are not our fault. All these humanistic philosophies are error because they totally eliminate any responsibility on our part! But James says that one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires. And that is good news cause if we are the variable then that means that we can change our circumstances! Praise God!

James goes on to say in verse 17 what God is responsible for. He says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." God is the One who gives all the good and perfect things in our lives!

And the great news is that the Father of lights does not change. This is what the Holy Spirit inspired James to illustrate to us.

You see, when he described God the Father as the Father of lights, he was referring to Him as the One who originated the sun, moon and stars. In other words, He is the Creator of the lights of the heavens. Just as the Apostle John told us, God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all (1 John 1:5). Therefore, He has no darkness to give! That is why He does not tempt anyone. It is because He does not have darkness to tempt with!

Now do we have darkness on this planet? Sure, we do! Are there shadows being cast on the earth? Sure, there are. But let me ask you a question based on this same analogy: Is it the sun's fault that we have this darkness and these shadows? Absolutely not! The sun is not where the variation comes from; the earth is what is rotating, thus causing the shadows. Likewise, the "Son" does not change either. He is the same yesterday, today and forevermore. However, this fallen world is certainly changing, rotating towards destruction.

But oh saints, what we can learn from this beautiful parable is this- because of the consistency of the sun rising in the east and setting in the west, we can see a clear reflection of God's consistently good and perfect nature! Amen! You see, just as much as we can bet the bank that the sun is going to rise in the east and set in the west every day, we can also be assured that our Father, who birthed the consistency that we find in the creation is willing to cause good gifts to rise to our east and perfect gifts to set to our west. In other words, the consistency that we find in nature reveals to us the consistency that is found in God's nature. Glory to God!

Therefore, our Heavenly Father of lights does not give good and perfect gifts one day and then pour out calamity on us on the next. No! He has no variation or shadow of turning. He is constantly and consistently pouring out His life on us. This is the God that we serve under this age of grace that we live in!

So, if God is not the variable, what is? Why are we surrounded with all of this darkness and why do we experience these bad things on the earth?

THE WAGES OF SIN

Well, while I do not want to spend too much time on this reason because it should be obvious to us, but one reason that bad things happen is because of our own poor choices and because of people's propensity to willingly disobey God's commandments.

Now, let me say that this is definitely not the only reason and we need not try and find something that is not there. Not everything bad that happens is because we did something wrong. However, this is certainly not something that we should ignore either. Why? Because if the Apostle Paul warned us in Romans chapter six that whomever we present ourselves servants to obey, we become its servants indeed- whether of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness (see Romans 6:16)- then this is a reality that we need to give heed to. For it is written, “the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23).

Yes, just as it was with the children of Israel- when they turned away from the One True God and began worshipping other gods, it always led them into captivity to other nations. Therefore, if we choose to depart from the Living God and begin working unrighteousness, we can open ourselves up to the wages and oppression of sin.

So, I'm not saying to go on a witch-hunt for some secret sin in your life that might be causing some struggles, but certainly don't turn away from the fact that outright disobedience can have opened you up to certain unwanted things. Amen?

And why? Because we have a devil, and he is looking for in-roads into our lives! And that leads me to my next point...

THERE IS A DEVIL

One very obvious, biblical reason why we see so much death, destruction, loss etc. on the earth is because we have an enemy called the devil.

Now this might be common knowledge to you and me, but I can assure you, it is not common knowledge amongst the body of Christ. Yes, there are a myriad of Christians out there who don't really believe that there is an actual spiritual being out there named “Satan” or the “devil.” Then probably the largest percentage of the church might say they know that there is a real devil out there, yet their beliefs do not indicate that they believe this at all. For example, there are many different denominations that attribute everything that happens on the earth to God, even all the things that steal, kill and destroy. Therefore, although they might say they believe there is a devil, they don't acknowledge that he is responsible for some bad things that happen.

But this is when that one statement by the Lord Jesus needs to trump any and all of our traditions, theology and doctrines: Jesus gave us in John 10:10 what I call “Theology 101”- “The thief does not come except to steal, kill and destroy; I have come that you may have life and life more abundantly.”

Church, in this one verse, Jesus taught us how to categorize what comes from God and what comes from the devil: if it steals from us, if it is trying to kill us, or if it involves destruction, then it is from the thief, Satan himself. In fact, Jesus said here that the thief does not come except to do these three things. In other words, this is always his mission- to do these three things. He comes for no other reason than these. But on the other hand, Jesus said that He has come that we may have life and that we may have it more abundantly. I love the Amplified version here! It says, that you may have it to the full, until it overflows!

And do not think that this is just an isolated verse either. Just look at Jesus' ministry- which, mind you, is full of Him imparting the more abundant life into those He both touched and who touched Him. Multitudes were healed! Grace and truth flowed from Him! And He said that everything that He both said and did were straight from the Father's heart. Therefore, this was not just Jesus doing His own thing; He was doing the will of His Father in all things, proving to us what the Father's heart truly is for His creation.

So, let's look at a few examples that we have in life and see what category they fall under:

1. How about cancer? Does cancer add life to us? Does it give us a more abundant life? Absolutely not! As a matter of fact, it falls under all three of those things that Jesus said the thief comes to do—steal, kill and destroy. Therefore, we can conclude that cancer comes from the devil.
2. What about any other sickness, disease or infirmity for that matter? How many of these physical afflictions actually add life to us (i.e. enhancing the quality of our life)? None of these do! In fact, they generally “steal” our time, our finances, our energy etc. They “kill” our ambition, our vigor etc. These illnesses might not strip us so much of all of these things, but they certainly do not add to our life. Do they bring us joy? Then they are not of the Lord because that is what He said He came to do.
3. How about things like tornadoes, hurricanes and earthquakes? Do they give life to the things that they touch? Certainly not! All they do is destroy things in their path, and if any living thing happens to be in their way, these natural disasters can and have certainly killed. They also steal people's property. So, these so-called “acts of God” by the insurance companies are more likely “acts of Satan” than they are “acts of God.”

But that leads me to this third and final reason why bad things happen...

CURSED AND FALLEN WORLD

We dealt with this one already but we need to go into a little bit more detail, but one of the main reasons bad things happen is simply because we live in a sin-cursed, fallen world.

So, contrary to some people's theology, not everything bad that happens is the devil per se. Yes, it is true that he is the one who comes to steal, kill and destroy, but Jesus did not say that he is ultimate source of everything that steals, kills and destroys. In other words, those three things are the devil's ultimate aim, but just because it is something that does one or more of these three things does not automatically make it “the devil.”

You see, there are some bad things that happen because we live in a fallen world. Yes, things like sickness or natural disasters can be inspired by the kingdom of darkness. We see this in the Book of Job when Satan sought to destroy everything that Job had because he afflicted him with the boils (a physical infirmity) and he sent storms that wiped out Job's children (natural disasters). However, we are incorrect to then think that every sickness and every storm is from the devil. Someone can catch a cold, which results in pneumonia and steals their life, but that is not necessarily because of the devil; it can be a result of them simply not using wisdom and walking around outside without a jacket on.

Friends, we live in a cursed world and there are things out there that if we live contrary to God's Word and are not led by His Spirit can affect us. There are people who are born with certain physical and mental conditions and that was not the devil's doing and was absolutely not God's doing; it was simply just a result of the curse that is on this world that has perverted God's original plan and intent for this planet.

For example, there was the time when Jesus' disciples saw a man who was born blind and asked the Lord, “Who sinned that this man was born blind? Him or his parents?” (see John 9:1-4) Now we think that is a cruel synopsis, but you have to consider the covenant that they had. It was actually understandable for these Jews to believe that somehow, somehow sin had to be involved for this man to be born blind because their covenant promised them that if they would obey His voice and follow His commandments that He would take all these curses away from them. But how Jesus responded here is something we should really take to heart... He said that it was not because of either of these things; it was for the glory of God to be revealed in Him.

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Now it is important to understand what Jesus did not say here. He did not say that this man's blindness was glorifying God. Jesus is just simply saying that the healing He was about to wrought in this man's life was for the glory of God. In other words, Jesus turned the attention of His disciples from why this man was born blind to God's glory being manifested in Him by healing his blindness. You see, we need to learn to look away from the "why did this happen?" to "what can now happen as a result?" Amen?

Yes, some things happen, not because there is a spiritual influence over it. Somethings are just simply natural repercussions of the fallen world we live in.

This is important to understand because in my experience there is that tendency in many Christians to be "spiritually superstitious" and this tends to dictate what they believe. For example, you will hear this statement thrown around in the church that "everything happens for a reason." Well, sometimes that reason is because people do dumb things, and is not necessarily because God had a purpose in it or that the devil had his hand in it. Amen?

No, some things are just natural circumstances because this world we live in is dying, and we need to be open to the fact that some things are simply a result of us living on a planet that is having "birth pangs" (Matthew 24:8).

You see, the Scriptures teach us that the earth is travailing with birth pangs, earnestly groaning to be redeemed from its corruption (Romans 8:19-22). Therefore, these storms and other natural disasters that are obviously increasing upon the earth are signs that the heavens and the earth are ready to give birth to the new heavens and the new earth. So, as we see these things increasing upon the earth, we need to do what Jesus said, "Look up! For our redemption draws near (Luke 21:28)!" These things are good signs, saints! Certainly, they are bad from a natural perspective. But they point to something new and beautiful that is ready to be given birth to! Amen!

So, again, what we need to understand is that while in the world, we will certainly have tribulations and there are some things that will happen in this life that we will not have answers to. However, we need to always stay on God's side- knowing that He is good and that His will for us is always to give us a more abundant life. Sure, we will have bad things that we experience in life that come as a result of sin, Satan and this fallen world, but Jesus said that we need to remain joyful, for He has overcome them all. Amen and Selah.

Next month, I plan to get into how we can overcome these bad things, by talking about the things that we can do on purpose to avoid these tragic events. Be on the lookout for that.

So, until next month: Maranatha!!!

Victoriously,

