

Can Tragedy Be Good For Us?

Only the spiritually-minded Christian will understand this lesson.

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 (ESV) ¹⁴The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for **they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.** ¹⁵The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ^{16f}“For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

I. Summary: Last week’s lesson “Reminders From Harvey and Irma”

1. **We live in a broken world.** Romans 8:20-22
2. **God is sovereign and awesome in power.** Psalm 115:3
3. **God can be trusted.** 1 Peter 4:19; Job 37:22-24
4. **It’s foolish to place importance on things.** Matthew 6:33, 19-21
5. **We don’t know the number of our days.** James 4:13-17
6. **God warns us repeatedly about the storm; it’s too late to prepare once it comes.**
Matthew 24:37-39

II. Reasons Why God May Choose Not To Intervene

Mark 4:37-41 (ESV) ³⁷And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” ³⁹And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” ⁴¹And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?”

First of all, maybe He does in some instances and we just don’t realize it. Even so, here are at least a few good reasons why God would not just step in and “save” people from natural disasters:

1. God set all of the natural forces in motion for His purposes. Should he ALWAYS intervene?

Why shouldn’t God step in and stop EVERY natural disaster? Why shouldn’t He manipulate natural forces to prevent ALL damage and ALL loss of life?

Isaiah 55:6-11 (NKJV) ⁶ Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. ⁷Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. ⁸“For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways,” says the Lord. ⁹“For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, ¹¹So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.

2. God may use tragedies...

- **to accomplish purposes (*unknown to us*)**
- **as a means of judgment.** A word of caution - we shouldn't think about natural disasters as always or even usually being a judgment from God.
- **to give us an opportunity to serve others.** We learn how to be more Christ-like through serving one another.
- **to teach us important lessons.**

III. How Can Tragedy Be Good For Us?

1. It Can Bring Out the Best in How Mankind Treats Mankind “Nothing good came out of that hurricane, except people bonding together.” (CBS announcer Florida-Tennessee game)

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 (ESV) ¹We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ²for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, ⁴begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—⁵and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

2. It Can Help Us To Depend On God

1 Peter 5:6-7 (ESV) ⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

2 Corinthians 1:9-10 (ESV) ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

3. It Can Help Us To Pray

In Faith - James 1:5-8

Fervently - James 5:13-16

Perseveringly - Luke 18:1-8

4. It Can Make This World Less Attractive

Romans 8:18-21 (ESV) ¹⁸For I consider that **the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.** ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be **set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.**

Hebrews 11:24-26 (ESV) ²⁴By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵**choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.** ²⁶He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was **looking to the reward.**

5. It Can Help To Purify Us

1 Peter 1:6-7 (ESV) ⁶In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have

been grieved by various trials, ⁷so that **the tested genuineness of your faith**—more precious than gold that perishes though it is **tested by fire**—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

James 1:2-4 (ESV) ²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of **your faith produces steadfastness**. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Romans 5:3-4 (ESV) ³More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering **produces endurance**, ⁴**and endurance produces character**, and character produces hope,

6. It Can Help Us To Be More Grateful

Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV) ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

7. It Can Help Us To Better Comfort Others and Share Our Faith

2 Corinthians 1:4 (ESV) ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Summary:

A. Trust The Conclusion!

1. In the new heavens and the new earth, there will be no curse (Rev 22:3) and thus no sorrow, pain, suffering, tears, or death (Rev 21:4)
2. Satan will never deceive or hurt us again. He will be tormented forever (Rev 20:10)
3. “Behold, I make all things new.” (Rev 21:5; Isa 25:8-9)

Isaiah 25:8-9 “He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. And it will be said in that day, ‘Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.’”

B. “For When I Am Weak, Then I Am Strong”

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 (ESV) ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.