

## THE MEASURE OF ADVERSITY – Teacher’s Notes

ON BOARD: Where was God when the firestorm swept through Paradise?

We want to look at what the Bible says about God’s role and our role in adversity – calamity – catastrophe and affliction. Is He a God far off or a God who is near? Are tribulations and trials just haphazard events, or is there divine planning and purpose for each one?

J.W.’s visit a few weeks ago – “What’s the cause for all the turmoil and chaos we see in the world today?” My answer surprised them: “God is the cause.” Discussed: God’s sovereignty; the full depths of our sinful depravity and lostness; the need for us to be in God’s salvation plan before the foundation of the world; the necessity of a God-caused new birth. They could only take about 10 minutes of this before the ‘leader’ said they have other people to talk to while looking at his watch.

### I. THE REALITY OF ADVERSITY

- a. Poor Job – Job 14:1 Here we see Job’s wisdom – previously sheltered life, but saw the world around him clearly – and now it happened to him.
- b. Young and old – Matthew 2:16; Psalm 90:9,10
- c. Personal, societal and universal – What about ‘intelligent’ life on other planets? Is it a sinless existence? Are there two or more Saviors? Doesn’t all of creation groan under the curse? Rom. 8

### II. THE CAUSES OF ADVERSITY

- a. Look in the mirror – Genesis 3:16-19 – Nothing unjust happens to us. Romans 3:23 and context. Jesus calls his disciples evil (Matt. 7:11); Why? Called Peter Satan. But what are we called after Pentecost? Sons, daughters, beloved, saints, children of God – but we will always deserve judgment.
- b. Second causes -
  - i. Natural disasters – weather, earthquakes, fires, floods, etc.
  - ii. Man-made calamity – war, greed, murder, immorality, etc.
  - iii. Personal affliction, adversity and tribulation – poor choices, poor DNA, ‘poor’ timing, etc.
  - iv. Satanic involvement – Genesis 3; Job 1; I Peter 5:8,9

c. First cause -

- i. Sovereignty of God - Psalm 135:5,6; Isaiah 45:7 Ancient false religions created two gods: one good and the other evil; one creates light and the other creates darkness.

- False arguments of Deists and Open Theists (read quotes)

- LBCF pg. 15:1 (we are in this room at God's behest. The very molecules of our body are moving by God's order and decree. Gravity and all physical laws would cease to exist apart from His personal choice and power. God WILLs and UPHOLDS all existence. He is NOT a God far off, but is near, personal and purposeful - in both adversity and ease - in tribulation and peace.

1. Jeremiah 6:19 w/Jeremiah 7:34 (judgments on Jerusalem) - Albert Barnes, "God directs judgments, disappointments, trials, and calamities; he has power to suffer the mad passions of people to rage, and to afflict nations with war; he presides over adverse as well as prosperous events."
2. Amos 3:6; Ruth 1:21 - Calvin, "God alone is the author of all events; that is, that adverse and prosperous events are sent by him, even though he makes use of the agency of men, that none may attribute it to fortune/chance, or to any other cause."
3. Hosea 10:10 (Israel will fall); I Samuel 2:6,7,10 (The Lord kills and makes alive) - "Whoever brings affliction, it is God who sends it." Thomas Watson - but our contemporary view is that God is present in blessing but absent in judgment - an absent landlord.
4. At your leisure: I Kings 11:14; Job 12:9,10; Psalm 22:28; 105:7; 115:3; Zephaniah 3:5; Nehemiah 9:33; Mark 4:41; Proverbs 3:11,12; Psalm 118:18;

- ii. Will of God - Ephesians 1:11; Acts 2:23 (see LBCF pg. 15:2) with Proverbs 16:33 - But isn't God sinning in permitting sinful actions? Thomas Watson - "The wisdom of God is seen in this, that the sins of men shall carry on God's work; yet that He should have no hand in their sin. The Lord permits sin, but doth not approve it. He hath a hand in the action in which sin is, but not in the sin of the action."

- iii. Purpose of God - Ephesians 2:1-7 - "to the praise of His glory" - repeated phrase in Ch. 1 - 3 times.

### III. THE USES OF ADVERSITY

- a. Repentance - Romans 2:4 by implication; II Chronicles 7:13,14
- b. Joseph sold into slavery - Genesis 37:23-28 "Carnal reason always traces everything from God to second causes, and there leaves them floating upon uncertainties; but faith traces them up to their first cause, and fixes them there; by which means God's hand is known, and Himself glorified." William Huntington - 18<sup>th</sup> century preacher/pastor
- c. The Psalmist afflicted - Psalm 119:71, 75 - that he might love God and His word more.
- d. Prayer - all of Psalm 88 (all about affliction); Matthew 6:13 (lead us not into temptation/affliction/trials/tribulation) - "When God lays men on their backs, then they look up to heaven." Watson
- e. Paul's thorn in the flesh - 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 - increased strength thru trusting and understanding God's purposes behind afflictions.
- f. Chastening for believers - Hebrews 12:3-11 (see LBCF pg. 15:5) "When I am in the cellar of affliction, I look for the Lord's choicest wines." Samuel Rutherford
- g. Both tribulation and hope promised - John 16:33 (in the world, you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer . . .); Romans 8:35-39 "Affliction may be lasting, but it is not everlasting." Thomas Watson
- h. Adorns a believer's ministry - 2 Corinthians 1:3-5; 6:4-10 (always rejoicing)
- i. God's glory manifested - John 9:2,3; John 11:4
- j. We will be rewarded - I Peter 1:6,7; Revelation 2:10 - "He that rides to be crowned will not think much of a rainy day." John Trapp