



# The FFBC Spotlight

Looking at contemporary issues through the filter of God's Word.

## Why Does God Allow Suffering?

By Pastor Ron Whitehead

As we think about recent events in the news, our minds cannot help but wonder why God would allow such horrific suffering and death. As the scenes of the devastating tsunami came across our television sets, most were moved to compassion. Yet, a question that also comes to mind is "Did God send the tsunami?" and if He did, why? While the question rolls around in our minds, few want to verbalize it since the very suggestion makes God out to be an unloving ogre. Let's ask the question and try to make some sense out of this event.

### Did God Send The Tsunami?

*"Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places." Psalm 135:6*

In the aftermath of such death and destruction it would seem heartless to blame God or even think that He would do such a thing. It would be easier to just declare this as a sad, yet uncontrollable event, and then absolve God of any blame. Yet if God is the Sovereign of the universe, then He was not simply watching us from a distance; He was involved. If God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe then we must conclude that God did send the Tsunami. Yes, God sent the tsunami, but why? Sadly, we may never know the mind of God in this matter, and it may disturb us to think about it, but there are some principles about God that we should remember.

#### • God was not caught off guard!

The Scriptures boldly proclaim in Psalm 115:3 that "our God is in the heavens, He hath done whatsoever He pleased." Believe it or not, God was pleased to send a tsunami that sent over 200,000 people into eternity, most of them destined for the Lake of Fire. There is a false teaching floating around today that implies that God does not have total control, but rather He simply responds to events that take place. Nothing could be further from the truth. God was not surprised by the

tsunami. He is not an uninformed bystander, but rather the Sovereign of the universe.

#### , God will get man's attention

In the book of Joel, God explains that He sent the plague of the locusts and grasshoppers for the purpose of getting man's attention. Mankind had turned its back on God and was living licentiously, all the while going through the weekly forms of worship. God had sent various prophets to get their attention but their words fell on deaf ears. The prevailing thought was that if God was displeased with us, why would we be experiencing such blessing as a nation? Sadly, God had to get their attention and it is only due to His mercy through chastening.



Our world is in the same predicament. The Word of God is readily available to people today, more than at any other point in history. Yet, despite this truth, man is oblivious to the voice of God. Around the world we see terrorist attacks, hurricanes, tornados, floods, and now a devastating tsunami and we chalk them up as natural disasters. God will get man's attention, and it is only due to His mercy that He has not destroyed us all.

#### f God is still in control

While the tsunami gave the impression that everything was out of control, we must understand theologically that God had everything under control. This was not done in an emotional outburst from God. God works all things after the council of His will (Ephes. 1:11). God demonstrated His control over nature on many occasions. You see we should not think of ourselves as being at the mercy of Mother Nature but rather at the mercy of Father God. In Isaiah 46:10 we are told that God has declared the end from the beginning. God has never had to take back control since He has never relinquished it even for a moment.

#### „ Sin and the curse is a result of the Fall.

In Genesis 2:17 and 3:17, we are told that the curse will affect all of creation. We are also told that the rain will fall on the just as well as the unjust. We understand that because of sin the world is under a curse and will remain there until Christ returns to set up His kingdom. Because of this there will be earthquakes, mudslides, tornados, and the like. At times innocent people suffer because of the curse of sin. Keep in mind, God is not to be blamed, man is.

## What About The People Who Died?

There are many people who are wondering what happened to the countless thousands of people who died so rapidly in a swift moment. After all, if God controls the weather, and He sent the tsunami, would He not give these people another opportunity to be saved? Would He be gracious and allow the innocent to enter His eternal kingdom? While we would like to ask God to extend some bonus grace for situations like this, it is simply out of the question. There is only one way to be saved and that must take place before a person's death. The Scriptures state that it is appointed unto man once to die and after that, the judgment. There is no purgatory, no second chance, and no bonus grace available. Think of **The gods of Islam and Hinduism have no answer for the people who are suffering.** the rich Luke 16 who had died and went to hell. He asked that someone be sent back from the dead to warn his family, but the response was that they have the Scriptures. If they will not believe that, there is no hope. How unfortunate that many of the people who died in the tsunami were believers in false gods. The gods of Islam and Hinduism have no answer for the people who are suffering.

## All Things Work Together For Good

Those words seem to drip with a stoic coldness in the face of devastation. It is easy for us to say since we were not touched by the tragedy. Howbeit, this verse was not meant for the ivory palaces but rather for moments such as these.

### S Many will be saved

Tragedy will cause some to grow more bitter toward God, while it will cause others to be more tender. The Scriptures explain that all men have the knowledge of God, but they are suppressing it. No one is born an atheist. Every individual can look at creation and understand that there is a God and that they are responsible to that God. This is what theologians call general revelation and while that is not enough to save a person, the one who responds positively to that knowledge is more likely to receive God's special revelation through the Scriptures.

### S God will be glorified

If the only thing that transpires because of suffering is a greater awareness of the holiness of God, then the suffering has accomplished its purpose. Our purpose for living is to glorify God, and whether our knees are bowed in submission later, the knees will do what He God will needs to do to force men to bow. As the Westminster Confession so cleverly sums it up, "the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."

## Your Relationship With God

The important question of the hour is what about your relationship with God. While you may not have been personally touched by what happened, you will one day meet God. One day your knee will bow. Many people were enjoying a vacation on the beach with death being the farthest thing from their mind, and within seconds they had entered their eternal destination. No man knows the hour of his or her death, but we must all be prepared. How is your relationship with God? The only hope is salvation through the vicarious death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is more than knowing the facts, but is a humble submission to Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

---

Ron Whitehead is Pastor of Bethel Bible Baptist Church and can be reached at 856.299.3307 or [bethel.bible@juno.com](mailto:bethel.bible@juno.com)

The FFBC Spotlight is a ministry of the Fellowship of Fundamental Bible Churches ([www.ffbc.ws](http://www.ffbc.ws)). For additional copies you may contact our Secretary, Pastor Ron Whitehead, at 856.299.3307 or at [bethel.bible@juno.com](mailto:bethel.bible@juno.com).