**Why Do Tornadoes Come?**

This is not a treatise on the science behind weather events but a discussion about why God allows such things as killer tornadoes. A few days ago an F5 tornado hit Moore, OK, and a number of people were killed including a number of small children. A legitimate question can be asked as to why a loving God allows such things to happen. I would like to address this question with truth but also with a sense of sorrow and support for those people who lost loved ones in that event.

Point one:

God created a world with no suffering, no sin, no devil, and no death. But man had a “better idea”. When Adam fell all mankind fell as did the physical world in which we now live. Death entered when sin entered. Some may say, “Well why didn’t God stop Adam from disobeying Him so that death would not enter?” That is a fair question. Consider this parallel: While you want God to have stopped Adam, how do you feel about God stopping you? It is a sad truth but a universal truth: We all sin, Christians and lost men. This is because we all, even born again saved Christians, have a sin nature. We will not be rid of that nature until we get to heaven. Our only hope to avoid sin in this life is a total surrender to the indwelling Christ and a life of complete dependence on Him. This is taught in our churches today but not as much as it should be. All sin begins as a failure of attitude; a dependence on our own strength and wisdom instead of God’s power and His wisdom. When that subtle change occurs in us, is it okay that God at that instant swoop down and stop those wrong thoughts and self reliant attitude? Were God to do that to all of us we would have an entirely different type of existence than we presently do. We would be a race of mind numb robots unable to even think a thought of our own and worst of all we would be totally unable to respond as free moral agents to our heavenly Father. The idea of responding to God as an individual expression and choice would disappear. I believe God made us with the goal that we each would individually, personally, and willing respond to Him. He did not want a race of robots. If we then are to be free in our response to God then He had to allow wrong responses such as Adam’s and our own. And that means He had to allow the consequences of sin, such as death and suffering. This may at first sound like a mean and cruel thing imposed on mankind; but if you really consider what type of life a controlled robot would have I think you’ll agree that God’s plan is best by far, even though His plan allows for pain and suffering.

Pont two:

Did those people who lost loved ones do something to deserve this tragic event? I completely reject that terrible notion. The bible teaches us that the “rain falls on the just and the unjust.” We are all in a fallen world and we are all subject to suffering, pain, and death. Let me share a story that relates to this point. A former pastor of mine, Gerald Tidwell from Durant, shared this true story with us years ago. When he was in seminary he was invited to return to his home church to hold a week of meetings. His topic for the week was reasons that our prayers are not answered. There are many verses that can be cited in this regard, and he covered most all of them. Late in the week he came home and found his mother crying bitterly. He said, “Mom, what’s wrong?” Through her tears she said, “What did I do wrong? I prayed every day for your brother to return from the war, but he was killed. Why didn’t God answer my prayers?” Well you can imagine how that simple conversation changed his theology forever. As preachers we have a tendency to somewhat glibly spout quick answers to really profound theological questions. Brother Tidwell was cured of that tendency rather quickly, and by his sharing those events with me, I too share in his “new” theology. We all need to be careful about accusing our fellow God fearing believers of not praying or behaving correctly and stating that as a reason for their suffering. Most of the people reading this article right now have experienced a tragic loss of a loved one or friend in their lives. Without getting into too much detail, my wife and I lost a child. Let me share just a little about my daughter, Abigail, who never drew a breath on this good earth. You need to understand that teaching is in my DNA. Both my parents were teachers and I have had a 30 year teaching career. My Grandmother, two of my Great Aunts, and two of my children were and are all involved in education. I believe in my heart that my daughter, Abigail, is currently teaching in a school in heaven. If you have lost a child, perhaps it might comfort you to join me in this belief and to meditate on your child being in my daughter’s heavenly classroom. Your loved one is in good hands and you will, assuming you are a child of God, see them again. I want to sit in Abigail’s class when I get there. Even though I was a double major in math and physics I’m sure that my dear daughter knows so much more about so many things than I do. Even if you are hesitant to join my belief in Abigail’s heavenly classroom, I would strongly encourage you to adopt the mind set of your loved ones being in a place where there is no pain, no sorrow, and no death. They are being loved even more than you ever could. Even if you are mourning the loss of someone who perhaps did not to your knowledge ever acknowledge God in their life; I would suggest to you that you do not know all things and perhaps at the very end of their life they responded in their own way to God. This is not a time to be judgmental, but rather hopeful.

Point three:

It may sound trite, but it is true that the incident could have been worse. It is perfectly appropriate to thank God for the deliverance of your loved ones as long as we are not contributing to a sense of bitterness in those whose loved ones were taken. Unless you are God then you simply do not know why some were lost and some were delivered. Think about a church meeting at the end of World War II. In that meeting a woman stands to praise God for the return of her son from the war, while next to her sits a woman whose son did not return. This is a tough situation. There is certainly nothing wrong with the first mother being thankful that her prayers were heard, but what about the second mother? I’m not saying that this is going to be easy but my suggestion is that the second mother can share in the joy of the mother whose son returned and perhaps adopt a mind set that her own son’s death in some way helped the return of the son who came home; and she can thank God for the time she had with her son and can treasure those memories while waiting to see him again in heaven. She had perhaps 20 years with her son. My wife and I never had even one moment with our precious Abigail. There is sorrow, great sorrow, in the death of a child and in these times a parent should be allowed to mourn in their own way and for as long as it takes. There is no set time or way. We in the body must come along side these bereaved believers and in a way that defies understanding share the burden and lessen its devastation. “In the good times praise His name and in the bad times do the same.” This life is like a vapor. On those cold mornings when you can see your breath, how long does that breath remain visible? That is the length of our time on earth especially when compared with eternity. The older I get the more I look forward to the reality of heaven, including a reunion with loved ones. I can’t say that I know exactly how it will all work out but I believe in a very real heaven with at least some memories. It will be the good things and the love that we remember, not our failures. We have every reason to anticipate those blessings. Now let me ask you a question. What will be the biggest blessing in heaven? Will it be the golden streets, the crystal sea, the reunion with loved ones, or what? I’m sure you’ll agree with me that the greatest thing in heaven will be Jesus and the throne of God. If that is true and since Jesus is with us now, can this life be a “slice of heaven”? I believe it can be and should be. Let these sufferings which none of us would choose or desire lead us to a closer walk with our Lord. He and He alone can take the “bad” times and turn them into blessings. If the loss of my Abigail has allowed me to minister to you in some way then I feel that she would be pleased with her old Dad. I would suggest to you that allowing a tragic loss to guide you into ways to minister to others is a good thing, and that there can be no better tribute to your lost loved one than to be used by our Father in His love to His people. Only when we get there will we fully understand the depths of His love and to a part of that love down here is the highest privilege known to man. God be with you and bless and comfort you.

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