

# Accepting Adversity and Tragedy

## Lesson 5 Large Scale Tragedies Answers in a Fallen World

### Introduction

In lesson 4 we considered some of the more important facts regarding the fall of man. In this lesson, we will go a step further and consider some of the implications of these facts as they relate to the tragedies and disasters that occur in life.

### Implications of the Fall

Let's look again at the consequences of the Fall for both Satan and mankind.

1. God pronounced that there would be enmity between Satan and Eve (Genesis 3:15). An enmity that would continue for generations to come. Satan has worked ever since to seek the harm of men and women physically and even more so to cost them their souls.

Apparently, there are times when Satan is able to directly damage our physical bodies; at least we know that God permitted him to do so with Job and his family (Job 1:12, 18-19, 2:6-7). But Satan has caused far more damage through the agency of wicked men and women who have been influenced by him to commit every imaginable act of harm to their fellow human beings. C.S. Lewis wrote in The Problem of Pain:

*"... the possibility of pain is inherent in the very existence of a world where souls can meet. When souls become wicked they will use this possibility to hurt one another; and this, perhaps, accounts for four-fifths of the sufferings of men. It is men, not God, who have produced racks, whips, prisons, slavery, guns, bayonets, and bombs; it is by human avarice or human stupidity, not by the churlishness of nature, that we have poverty and overwork."*

As you contemplate the suffering that exists in the world because of the actions of man, how could someone disagree with this statement? The sinful acts of men and women explain many of the large-scale tragedies that occur in the world, and it is Satan who is behind this harm, not God. Nevertheless, Satan is the one who whispers in the ears of those disturbed by these tragedies that they should doubt the goodness or even existence of God!

2. Despite the harm inflicted by Satan, God will not intervene by preventing man from exercising free will. Without free will, without the ability to make moral choices, we would be mere robots, programmed to serve God out of necessity and not from the emotions of love and thanksgiving of individuals made in the image of God. Indeed, we could hardly consider ourselves to be in the image of God if we merely served him from instinct not choice. God desires free will agents to follow Him, but such freedom necessitates the ability to choose disobedience and thus wickedness that

harms. We may question the wisdom of God in allowing us such freedom, but consider these two questions:

- Do we really prefer the alternative of no free will? Can we imagine a world in which there is no love or kindness shown to anyone freely? Would love, in fact, have any meaning if there were no element of choice?
  - Has God merely abandoned us to all of the damage caused by wicked people making wicked choices? Remember Lesson 3 and the multi-faceted concern of God for us. Remember the plan that God has in Christ as first mentioned in Genesis 3:15.
3. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve God changed the nature of the world and thus:
- a. Nature itself is now a place of hardship and difficulty. The door was opened for disease (and thus epidemics), for famines, for weather problems, for earthquakes, and for all the problems associated with man trying to maintain a living through the sweat of his brow.
  - b. Death will eventually fall upon every person (Genesis 3:19, Romans 5:12, James 4:14, Hebrews 9:27). We struggle mightily against the very idea of dying, but our bodies and the world in which we live are designed to ultimately bring about death. It is certainly more disturbing when death comes catastrophically, but this is also a feature of the fallen world.
  - c. C.S. Lewis pointed out, *“(God) began to rule the organism in a more external way, not by the laws of spirit, but by those of nature. Thus the organs, no longer governed by man’s will, fell under the control of ordinary biochemical laws and suffered whatever the inter-workings of those laws might bring in the way of pain, senility and death”*.

### **But Why?**

Although an understanding of the implications of the Fall will help us understand what makes the world function as it does, we still tend to struggle with the question – “Why?”. Why does God allow it to continue in this way? Why did a specific disaster occur as it did? There are two thoughts to consider in this regard; the second of which will lead us to the next lesson:

- When we dwell on the why, it is a sign that we fail to see what is really at stake. We must look beyond the tragedies and disasters and see God’s ultimate plan to overcome Satan. We must be able to see God’s focus on our individual salvation. This is the reason we laid the foundation of Lesson 3. It is also beneficial to dwell on this thought: would a God who was willing to send His Son to die for us really make life any more difficult than necessary for us to serve Him? God has our best interests at heart.
- Tragedies can serve a useful purpose. Indeed, we will see later that all personal trials and adversities can teach us useful lessons. Large-scale tragedies highlight the fact that something is wrong with the world. They pull at us to look to God for answers and to look at what lies beyond this life. We’ll concentrate on this point in the next lesson.