

“CRISIS and CALAMITY”

When people are going through a hard time, or suffering a loss, they ask “WHY has God done this?” “HOW could God ALLOW this to occur?”

As we consider the phenomena of crisis and calamity we need first to turn to the nexus of History when pain, misery, sorrow, crisis, confusion, calamity, tears, and anger entered our world.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. (Gen 3: 6-8)

They pulled all created things and beings with them down into sin.

“For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Romans 8:22

Crisis and Calamity are a result of that one moment. The word crisis means judgment, both in the meaning “decision” and the consequences of the decision. Let us look at two persons, Jonah and Job.

1.) Although a man of God, Jonah made ungodly decisions in crises. Jonah was ordered to go to Nineveh to preach a warning to them, he was to call them to repent and change their way of life. Jonah prophesied during the reign of wicked King Jeroboam in Israel. Nineveh was their enemy.

For the LORD saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter; and whether bond or free, there was no helper for Israel. (2 Kings 14:26 NKJV)

This was a crisis in his life and he made an ungodly decision. “WHY has God done this?” “HOW could God ALLOW this to occur?” Why didn’t God send him to warn the wicked king and others in the capital city of Samaria? Why give Nineveh a chance to repent? “There is no reason to do that—it’s a waste of time. Besides,” Jonah reasoned, “God is merciful and will just show mercy to them anyway.” So Jonah chose to go away from Nineveh, to Tarshish.

There was a storm; the sailors were frightened. They were tossing baggage and food overseas. They went to get Jonah and he was sleeping. He KNEW why and from Whom the storm came. After casting lots, Jonah told the Captain to toss him overboard and the winds would cease. Jonah was cast overboard and was swallowed by a Great Fish. So Jonah had his next moment of Crisis in the belly of the fish. This time his response was to cry out to God. This time he did what was right.

"In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry. Jonah 2:2

Jonah then does what God commanded, calling the people of Nineveh to repentance. The whole city, led by the King of Nineveh, weeps and mourns and comes back to God.

Jonah is at a third crisis. This time he reacts in an ungodly manner. Jonah goes off into the corner and stamps his foot at God much like a petulant child. "See I told you that you were going to do this.. That's why I was so quick to go to Tarshish."

So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. (Jonah 4:5-6 NKJV)

He sits down to watch the city. Did he think God would change His mind and destroy the city?

Jonah has a fourth crisis. The plant God had given Jonah for shade, He now takes away. God causes it to wither and die away, leaving Jonah sweltering in the sun. Jonah responds to this crisis by being angry with God.

Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" But the LORD said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. "And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left-and much livestock?" (Jonah 4:9-11 NKJV)

Just because we are Christians, born again, does not mean that we will react to crises by obeying God and with love toward God and our neighbors. Jonah didn't.

2.) Job was a righteous man. In crises his decisions are guided by his passion to obey and worship the God who had blessed him. He exemplifies the Covenant father. We see him offering prayers and sacrifices for his children's sins in case they may have forgotten.

The story of Job starts out on earth, and then the scene shifts to Heaven, to the very presence of God. The "sons of God" have come together to present themselves to Him. God asks Satan where he had come from. Satan replies that he has been wandering the face of the Earth. God asks him "Have you considered my servant Job?"

Faith is a gift from God bestowed upon those whom He has chosen. Faith is never a by-product of our works and actions. If it were man made, then God would be "taking a chance, and betting on Job".

We know it is a gift from God, not of ourselves. God is the “Author and Finisher of our faith.”(Hebrews 12: 2)

Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved. (Psalms 55:22 NKJV)

Job undergoes a series of crises much worse than Jonah’s, they are calamitous. Strange weather phenomenon and tribes of traveling marauders - Sabeans, Chaldeans - destroy his cattle, his dwellings, his servants, and all his children. All is taken from him.

Pastors often come to a family stricken with grief, mourning the loss of a family member. Not many look at the Pastor and say: “It’s Okay, Pastor; they are in heaven rejoicing. God blessed us with their presence for a time” Job lost ten children and his cattle, his means of sustenance. Job mourned, but he also worshipped. He fell to the ground and He worshipped God in his grief. “Through all of this Job did not sin or blame God” (Job 1:22)

A second Heavenly meeting occurs. This time Satan accuses God of placing a hedge around Job and protecting him. God then allows Satan to inflict Job with illness, but he places a limit on what the devil may do to Job. This should comfort us in our medical afflictions. God sets a line where he says, to this point pain, disease, and afflictions may spread, but no more.

Job then undergoes a series of medical illnesses that afflict him. He has sores which itch him and drive him so mad that he uses broken pottery to scratch them. Job asks the questions “WHY has God done this?” “HOW could God ALLOW this to occur?” He addresses these questions, in various forms to God over and over. He keeps asking God to give him some explanation.

Blameless and upright, a fearer of God A man truly righteous, no pious façade
One about whom God was accustomed to boast
And so one whom Satan desired the most.
One day the accuser came breathing out lies
“It’s Your holy handouts, his faithfulness buys
In one desperate day his possessions were lost
His children all killed in one raw holocaust His children all killed in one raw holocaust
And yet through it all Through the tears and pain
He worshipped His God Found no reason to blame.
Once more the deceiver denounced and decried “It’s skin for skin, and hide for hide.
Strike down his flesh and he’ll surely deny
And confess that his praying has all been a lie.”
“Very well, take him,” the Holy One sighed
But you must spare his life, my son shall not die.”

So Job was afflicted with terrible sores
Sat down in the ashes to wait for the Lord
Sat down in the ashes to wait for the Lord
And yet through it all Through the tears and pain
He worshiped his God Found no reason to blame.

"His Story" from Job's Suite by Michael Card

Every man who is married knows that in times of crisis our spouse can give valuable input and support. Our friends counsel and "befriend" us, or disciple us in the faith. Part of the punishment for a prisoner is the stripping away of that support system. What happened to Job was another crisis.

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (Job 2:9-10 NKJV)

Three friends come to Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. When they see him, they tear their robes, put dust on their heads and sit with him for seven days and nights before they say a word. Job keeps asking for God to give him an answer. His friends, in different ways say that God is punishing Job for some sins that Job must certainly be aware of. Job denies that he has sinned against God. His statement, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Is a high point of faith in the Old Testament.

Most people assume that if something terrible happens to someone, they deserved it. "What goes around comes around." His own disciples asked Jesus about a blind man:

And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. (John 9:2-3 NKJV)

Throughout the book of Job, there are questions. "WHY has God done this?" "HOW could God ALLOW this to occur?" Human questions born out of grief. Honest painful questions to the Lord. Not one question is ever answered. Instead God challenges Job to answer his questions. The result is Job's humbling response: I am the created—you are the Creator. I spoke out of place. He is then blessed again with a family. His friends were punished for insisting that God was punishing him for sin. Their presumption was blasphemy. In fact, God was using Job's faith and obedience to bring glory to Himself before all the sons of God, but Job never knew this. The blind man never knew that he was born blind so that God could reveal His works through Jesus. We walk by faith not sight.

How will we respond when Crisis or Calamity come? Will we be sullen and angry like Jonah or trusting God but asking Him why like Job?