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Where Was God?

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The news is filled with tragedy and devastation, both natural and man-made. When someone's life is lost in an accident or illness, often a loving family member will ask, where was God? The implication of this question is that a loving God would not allow this to happen. The question is as old as the first tear, and as recent as the latest newscast. Why does God allow suffering, heartache, disease, and death among His own children?

Some time ago I read W.C. Morro's book, "Brother McGarvey", a biography of J. W. McGarvey, a very well-known gospel preacher and teacher of the 19th century. On one occasion brother McGarvey went to the home of a woman whose son had just died. In her grief she said, "Brother McGarvey, where was God when my son died? Without hesitation he answered, "the same place he was when His Son died." What a beautiful answer. Heartache and death of a loved one should not be blamed on God. It should remind us that the "Creator of the Universe" experienced the same thing, and that He knows how we feel.

People handle adversity in different ways. While one may clench his fist and shake his hand at God asking, "Why, God?" another man may raise his open hand to God and simply ask, Why?" Though these actions are very similar, they are poles apart in attitude. The first man questions and blames God for what has transpired while the second man simply seeks to know why. When Job experienced the total devastation of wealth and family on the same day, no doubt the impact of this to Job was no different than the pain and heartache that we would have in a similar situation. But notice how Job reacted: *"Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.'"* (Job 1:20-21) However, Mrs. Job had a different reaction. She told her husband, "curse God and die." (Job 2:9). But Job responds to her by saying, *"...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 2:10)

A passage that I have taped to my computer monitor (so I can see it every day) is Psalm 119:71, which says, *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes."* John Gill in his commentary says of this passage, "Afflictions are sometimes as a school to the people of God, in which they learn much both of their duty and of their privileges; and when they are teaching and instructive, they are for good." In times of adversity, death and heartache, we need to look for the value in the situation rather than seek to blame God.

A Great Evangelistic Tool

Scott Smelser

I think it works better than radio, better than auto-dialers, better than showings of Jule Miller filmstrips, better than mailing out a bulletin, better than Dial-a-Bible-Reading, better than debates, better than cable TV.

What is it? It's brethren not being conformed to the world.

If a church is made up of people who understand 184 current and past issues correctly, but their lives do not show superior conduct, servitude, and holiness, don't expect an auto dialer, computer, printer, broadcast antenna, or cable outlet to compensate for the failure.

When church members think like the world, dress like the world, talk like the world, and chase money and status symbols like the world, it is the world that is winning them, not the other way around.

When church members are selfish, egotistical, arrogant, and shallow, then they are not in a position to help the world to a higher plane.

If our families are splitting up, our children are dropping out, and our homes are little different from our neighbors then our "light" gets rather difficult to notice.

But if people learn self-denial (Lk. 9:23), learn submission to God and care for our neighbor (Matt. 22), learn to be servants (Jn. 13), learn to be content (1 Tim. 6:8), learn to invest in family (Titus 2:5; Eph. 6:4; Prov. 22:6), and learn to clean out the inside of the cup, not just the outside (Matt. 23), then bright lights will shine.

"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light ... having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that ... they may glorify God" (1 Pet. 2:9-12).

"Present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God ... and be not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:1,2).

We are not called simply to know some things different from the world — we are called to rise above the world, and to "be holy" (1 Pet. 1:15). And when people become that kind of light in the world, they become great evangelistic tools in God's service.

And it will far exceed the effect of debates, radio, TV, and mail outs.

