

Application Guide: “The Sovereignty of God”

Jan. 9th, 2005: Joe Bartemus, Pastor of Adult Education, preached an stirring message the was meant to help Christians know how to respond to the recent Tsunami in the Indian Ocean that caused the death of over 150,000 people and billions of dollars of damage. Based on Romans 8:18-27, Pastor Bartemus discussed three “groans” that occur as a result of the effect of sin in our world. Creation, believers, and the Holy Spirit all groan over the reality of suffering, pointing to the future hope we have in God’s promise of redemption.

1. **Groan #1 – Creation:** Pastor Bartemus mentioned that creation (nature, animals) has been greatly effected by man’s sin (cf. Ge. 3:14-19). God’s plan of redemption includes freeing creation from the curse of sin (Rom 8:21; Rev 21:1-5; 22:1-3).
 - a. What are specific ways you can see the effects of sin in the creation, culture, and world around you (e.g. death, pollution, distortion of sex, etc)?
 - b. Even though creation will not fully be redeemed until God creates the New Heaven and New Earth, what are ways we can *presently* reverse the negative influences on creation and culture and use them for redemptive purposes?
2. **Groan #2 – Redeemed Humanity:** Though Satan may cause death and destruction in our lives (Job 2:7; 1 Pet 5:8), his permission to do these things ultimately comes from God (Job 1:12; 2:10). There are many reasons why God allows suffering and pain to take place in our lives – to show His glory and point people to Himself (Jn. 9:1-3), judge the wicked (Ps. 147:6), show mercy (Isa. 53:4-5, 10), test or discipline his people (Heb 12), or simply to give people over to the results of their own sin (Rom. 1:26ff).
 - a. Think of a time of trial in your life that God took you through. As difficult as it was, how did God use it for good in your life (Rom 5:3-5; 8:28)? How did the trial strengthen your faith and trust in Christ?
 - b. Amidst suffering, how can we be people who hope in God’s promises, persevere, and wait eagerly for the promise of heaven? How could our commitment to these three tasks amidst adversity influence nonbelievers around us?
3. God makes very clear that suffering is not always bad or the result of sin (Jn. 9:1-3; Rom 5:3-5). This runs in stark contrast to what our culture says about suffering.
 - a. How does our culture view suffering and the way we should respond to it?
 - b. How has our American culture influenced the church to make safety/being comfortable one of our highest priorities? How is this in opposition to God’s Word (cf. Mt. 5:11; Jn. 15:20; 1 Pet. 4:12-19; 2 Tim. 3:12)?
4. We cannot fully understand why God allows suffering, but these times can be a catalyst for helping us cling all the more to the promises of God.
 - a. What encouragement and peace can we find in God and his Word amidst suffering (cf. Rom 8:26-28; 2 Cor. 1:3-11; Heb. 2:18)?

Recommended Reading:

Lewis, C.S. *The Problem of Pain* and *A Grief Observed*.

Piper, John. “Tsunami, Sovereignty, and Mercy.” and “Tsunami and Repentance”. See

http://www.desiringgod.org/library/fresh_words/2004/122904.html and

http://www.desiringgod.org/library/fresh_words/2005/010505.html

Yancey, Philip. *Where is God When It Hurts?*