

Tragedy is not something anyone wants to deal with. It is defined as: “an event causing great suffering, destruction and distress.” And we usually associate it with death. Yet, not a one of us is immune from its existence or the daily potential it could strike in the vicinity of us or those we love.

We often wonder why such things happen. Maybe if we could figure out the cause, we could stop it or control it. But, as just the last 8 days has shown us, tragedies upon this earth come from so many different possible causes, there is no way to control it all the time.

- 1) **Natural Disasters** - *Canton Tornado – Last Saturday – With no warning at all, four people, Lucretia Sykes, James Clayton, Russell Barlow & Kenneth Hughes died. 50 more people were hurt.*
- 2) **Evil Actions** - *UT Austin – Monday afternoon – Harrison brown was stabbed to death by a heartless attacker, and three others were wounded.*
- 3) **Bodily Illness** - *We learned this week that our brother in Christ, Brandy's uncle, Randy Payne has a terminal brain tumor and only a few months to live. Cancer has affected others.*
- 4) **Accidents** - *This goes back about seven weeks, but my father in law was in an accident and it took his life. Even with part of that in his control, there was no way to expect this outcome.*

In each of these cases, lives were unexpectedly lost or may soon be lost. And in each of these cases, there are family members and friends, brethren and neighbors who feel the effect of these tragedies.

We want to know why, but we often can't even figure out WHO, much less why. Did God cause something because of sin? Did God allow something because of testing? Did Satan cause something to bring pain? Was it just the natural course of life? Or the experiences of time and chance? Or was it just some person's fault and they alone are the culprit? We struggle with this. And for much of it, we will never be able to EXPLAIN TRAGEDY, therefore we will rarely be able to CONTROL IT.

But we are not left without important knowable information. *Some are truths we must know that can help us through such events – and some are truths that really only become real to us as we endure them.*

I. God is Sovereign

- a. We just don't use this word enough. We talk about elements of His sovereignty, like power, majesty and glory. But this word announces His as “Supreme Ruler.” He is over all. Nothing happens outside of His sight, emotional involvement, or allowance.
- b. **Psalm 103:19** – Amen? How about this? **V1-6**
 - i. He pardons, heals, redeems, crowns, satisfies, performs great deeds – In His Time.
- c. Anything is possible with Him. And so we take all to Him in prayer and Trust Him.
- d. When I feel powerless, fragile and afflicted – I remember what I learned as a child:
 - i. My God is so BIG, so STRONG, and so MIGHTY, there's nothing my God cannot do!
- e. **I Timothy 6:13-16** – He is above all and we will see Him again! Trust Him now!

II. God is Comforter

- a. I'm not saying God changes or alters or molds every situation to you. But God provides comfort, some way to deal, to even thrive, in every situation. ex) Jesus in Garden – Angel
- b. If He is always here and sees, it means He will not watch us hurt without aid. He will offer comfort and strength in each and every affliction. But we have to receive it.
- c. **II Corinthians 1:3-4a** – These people were dealing with a double dose of tragedy issues. Firstly, they were susceptible to every form of hurt and loss that we are. In addition, they were targeted by the world, and made to suffer further for their faith. We serve the Sovereign “God of all Comfort.” He can comfort through anything.
- d. Okay, how does all that work? What is the practical application of “God of Comforts”
 - i. Through Everything about Jesus – 1:2,5,9-10, 19-20 –
 - ii. Through Everything about the Church – 1:4-6; 7:5-7

III. Humanity is Good

- a. It is easy to get cynical and stay negative about “society” and “humanity.” We talk about drugs and crime and immorality and how we don't know about our children's future.

- b. *I saw a video this last week. There was an old white guy, two Hispanic guys, two younger white guys, and a black guy, all behaving frantically for 5 minutes. What do you think was going on? They were saving the lives of 2 kids in an overturned truck about 30 miles from here.*
- c. *When my father in law died, we hugged 500 people from as far as the Dakotas, people we hadn't seen in 20 years, people we didn't even know, who came to support us.*
- d. Stories of unity and valor and kindness, no matter the history, are unending. I have hope in humanity by the way people innately and inherently help in times of pain.
- e. Tragedy reminds us that we are all God's creation and we all have good in us. And truthfully, Christians need to remember that. We can get a very "isolationist" approach to life. "We are saved. World is lost. Build a bubble. Wait for Jesus."
- f. **Romans 1:18-20** – The world is mostly good people, kind people, who have, for whatever reason, suppressed the Truth about God. **10:2-3** – Or those who are mistaken about faith and emotionalism. **Romans 1:16** – But our outlook shouldn't be to hide, but to HELP them. To share the Gospel, to give to help families, to be the kind of goodness that is within us all. Tragedy is so painful. But humanities most hopeful moments come through it. And with that, a renewed belief that there is good "out there" and the Gospel can find hearts.

IV. Life is Fragile

- a. For us all. Yes, that includes you. Tragedy alters lives, takes lives, shapes lives. We are not immune or entitled to avoidance. Solomon said, "*there is an appointed time for every event under heaven – a time to weep and a time to laugh / mourn and dance / give birth and die.*"
- b. We don't have nearly any information other than that: WHY? WHEN? HOW?
- c. Everyday, 300 Americans die in what we call "accidents." Do you watch the number board on I20 that accumulated road fatalities in Texas? Many more with illness or crime.
- d. Yes, those numbers scare me but they also serve as a very healthy reminder – no guarantees.
- e. **James 4:14** – "You are just a vapor..." At it's longest it isn't very long. Some in Genesis lived to be over 900 years old! But each verse ends with "and he died."
 - i. **V13** – Plans are good. But hanging hopes on plans is very unwise. Life is fragile.
 - ii. **V15** – If I live today, it is because the Lord willed it. So we should live the Lord's Will.
- f. **James 4:7-10** – This ought to draw us to the feet of the Sovereign, Eternal Ruler!

V. Today is Important

- a. **James 4:16-17** – To put off any good or godly action today is arrogant and foolish. And trust me here, there are many, many people who have died, who would give everything to be right here in a room like this, for just one more "today" to submit to Christ and do what is right.
- b. I want to be clear on this point: your LIFE today is more important than
 - i. Your life tomorrow – since it is fragile and uncertain and doesn't technically exist.
 - ii. Your death – today or tomorrow – **Luke 13:1-5** – Some Jews reported to Jesus the tragedy of the deaths of Jewish martyrs, as if this would solicit some powerful reaction of Christ. His reaction: Repentance in your life, right now, is what matters. Your death, when or how won't matter – as soon as this life ends.
- c. Speaking of tragedy – I still think of December 2012, at the Sandy Hooks Elementary school, where 20 6-7 year olds lost their lives, along with 6 adults. It was horrific. All of our points today were in play then
 - i. God was there. Allowing evil, but weaving providential plans for spiritual good.
 - ii. God brought comfort. Faith and prayer and Jesus were centerpieces of coping.
 - iii. Humanity was good. The outpouring of love and support and kindness countrywide.
 - iv. Life was definitely fragile. With no warning at all, 26 lives were lost.

But that's been 4 ½ years. And 20 innocent souls died. And only one thing matters: that all 20 of them were right with God on that one December day. 6 adults died. They don't feel the pain of the shots or the terror of the event anymore. Only one thing matters: their faith on that day.
- d. **Luke 13:6-9** – Patience was extended. That tree was give 1,000 today's. But it didn't take advantage of any one of them. Then came the last Today. The day of judgment upon it. How was the tree to know what day it would be? It couldn't. Everybody has a last Today and they'll be gone. That makes today, this day, this chance, this moment, the most valuable of your life.