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20 years old.

THE NERVE OF SOME PREACHERS!

A woman who had just gone through surgery told me that her former preacher had the nerve to tell her that God was punishing her because she was not going to his church anymore. When leaders make erroneous and self serving statements like that it makes me want to defend the innocent, to say the least. I think that was an ugly underhanded attempt on the part of the pastor to control her life through fear.

PUNISH PEOPLE for POOR PAST PERFORMANCE?

If you were ever involved in an auto accident, or if you were ever told that you needed surgery, did you wonder if God was punishing you for something? Most people do, you know. Some of my Christian friends, unknown to each other, have gone through trauma in their lives, recently. In each case an erroneous counselor reinforced that natural fear by saying that God was bringing tribulation to their lives in order to punish them for not keeping some rule of their church. When my friends contacted me for comfort and counseling they all had one serious question in common. They asked, "Is it true? Was the recent tribulation in my life a punishment from God for something wrong that I did in the past?"

NO! NEGATIVE! NO! NOT NOW!

My answer to each one was, "Absolutely not! Our GOD does not punish Christians for sins that they have committed in the past. Your advisor was wrong - and doubly wrong for attempting to use fear to control your life. I hope that I can be helpful in removing that fear. You were given religious instruction by your counselor based on the gospel of the circumcision. Since you are living with the gospel of the UNCircumcision, don't pay any attention to those religious ideas. They don't apply to people like you, though they once did."

FREE FINE FRIENDS FIND FAVOR

My friends had been FREE TO LIVE in grace with the gospel of the UNCircumcision (EL ELYON, love, light, forgiveness, mercy and life). But their counselors were still operating with the gospel of the circumcision (YAHWEH, law, judgment, condemnation, punishment, death). I have chosen to attempt to walk out my life with the gospel of the UNCircumcision. And, I admit that I used to teach the gospel of the circumcision, but not any more.

The fact that there are two gospels (Gal. 2:7) may be the reason that this ministry does teach Bible lessons that are very different from the things that the counselors taught my friends.

BIBLE BELIEF BRINGS BEST BLESSINGS

It is more fun to study about the health and wealth that has been provided for us by our Lord JESUS CHRIST. But now is the time to address the subject of TRIBULATION in the life of Christians. It does happen, you know.

The purpose of this Bible lesson is to remove the heavy burden of unscriptural FEAR OF PUNISHMENT from the minds of my friends - and to keep fear from forming in the minds of any one else. Don't fear the future, no matter how heavy your present load of tribulation is.

TWO TROUBLE TYPES THAT TURN TO TRAUMATIC TRAGEDY

JESUS told us about TWO types of tragedy. And he said that no one is singled out by God to receive either kind of tribulation because they had been any worse than any one else.

"There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And JESUS answering said unto them, suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners (debtors) above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:1-5)

PILOT PERSECUTED PEACEFUL PEOPLE PER PLAN

The first story was about a tragedy that had come because of the acts of some person. "There were present some that told of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." Pilate was the person who brought the tragedy.

JESUS said, "Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?" Unfortunately, far too many people do erroneously answer, "Yes. I think that they had to be very big sinners for such a bad thing to have happened to them."

TALL TOWER TO TERRIBLY TROUBLESOME TRAGIC TRIBULATION

The second story was about a tragedy that came out of nowhere; it was not caused by some person. The tower at Siloam fell on eighteen people and killed them. They were at the wrong place at the wrong time. Later we will see that the tragic event was in their script, all along.

JESUS said, "Think ye that they were sinners (debtors) above all men in Jerusalem?"

His answer to both questions (about the Galilaeans and about the 18 at the tower) is the same, "I tell you nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (Luke 13:3 and v. 5)

That is really heavy! I don't want to perish, and I don't think that anyone else wants to perish either. That means that we all had better "repent". And we all need to know exactly what we are doing when we "repent".

RIGHT REPENTANCE REAPS RICH REWARDS

The word "repent" is not understood in most Christian circles. "Repent" usually brings forth the idea of someone crying at an altar in a church. That could be the truth but it is usually very far from it. People often cry because they were caught and subsequently exposed, rather than because they truly "repented". "Repent" means "after - knowing". "Repent" does not necessarily mean to cry or to be sorry, though it could mean that. "Repent" means to "THINK DIFFERENTLY AFTER - KNOWING".

TWO TRAGIC TALES THAT TEACH THEE TO THINK

So, the two Bible stories of tragedy teach us how to think. To keep from "perishing" we must "THINK DIFFERENTLY AFTER KNOWING." After knowing what? In these two examples JESUS taught us that we should never allow ourselves to ever think that

the tribulation in our lives is the result of our being any worse than anyone else.

WHAT GOOD IS TRIBULATION?

Well then, if not for a spanking, why does God allow tribulation to invade our lives? What is trouble for? What good can come from bad? Tribulation comes for two main good reasons. One is to provide a learning experience to teach us something that we will need to know for the future. Another reason is to fulfill prophecy which is nearly the same as to fulfill the will of God.

GOD CAN'T REMEMBER OUR SINS

Our GOD, EL ELYON, can't remember our sins (even though other people can). Our sins are covered by the blood of JESUS CHRIST. Our GOD can't see them because they are covered. They are buried in the deepest sea. God said, "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will NOT remember thy sins." (Isaiah 43:25).

How can God bring some punishment against us for something that we have done, when he can't even remember anything bad that we have done? The obvious answer is - that he can't.

But, this pattern did not hold before JESUS came. YAHWEH, the name nature of the God of Israel in the Old Testament, and the God of the gospel of the circumcision in the New Testament, did truly bring punishment (WRATH) to people as a result of their sins.

But EL ELYON, the name nature of the father of JESUS CHRIST, and the GOD of the gospel of the Uncircumcision, has not brought punishment (WRATH) to any Christian that I can find in the N.T. Some people think that Ananias and Sapphira were exceptions but I don't because they were under the gospel of the circumcision and YAHWEH brought their punishment.

TWISTED TEACHING TURNS TO TROUBLE

Do not FEAR, our GOD does not punish Christians for sins that they have committed in the past. But, this is not an excuse to do something wrong in the future. So, we must be on guard against an unclean spirit that would twist this teaching into the contorted erroneous view - that since Christians won't be punished for sins of the past, then it must be O.K. for Christians to do whatever they feel like doing in the future. If it's wrong it's wrong. A mature Christian won't purposefully choose to be bad in the future, even though they believe that punishment won't come for sins committed in the past.

Immature Christians are under the gospel of the circumcision, with the law, judgment, condemnation,

punishment and death. And they need that gospel to protect them while they are growing up. That's the gospel that is taught by the preacher who said that God was punishing the woman who had the surgery. But, mature Christians operate in the gospel of the UNcircumcision with its love, light, forgiveness, mercy and life. That's the gospel with which we want to operate.

CAUSE AND EFFECT?

We are not talking about cause and effect. Sure, if we burn our body then the scar will stay with us all of our lives. That is cause and effect. I can not find that JESUS took away our scars at the cross or resurrection. For an example of what is not cause and effect, let us suppose that a person carelessly burned themselves (or got drunk, or got high or accidentally pregnant, etc.) and somewhere and sometime later a tower (or a car or something) fell on them. That's not cause and effect. One event has nothing to do with the other; in opposition to what the counselors told my friends.

TRIBULATION OR WRATH?

JESUS said, "In the world, you (good guys) shall have TRIBULATION. (John 16:33)

There is a big difference between the TRIBULATION of God and the WRATH of God.

TRIBULATION is for the good guys.

WRATH & TRIBULATION are for the bad guys.

Did you see the difference? There are no scriptures that say that the good guys will receive God's WRATH, but the bad guys will.

WRATH is a punishment.

TRIBULATION is a learning experience.

Good guys only get TRIBULATION.

Bad guys get both WRATH and TRIBULATION.

BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE

Then why do bad things like tribulation happen to good people?

Because tribulation is in their scripts!

Remember, JESUS said, "In the world, you (good guys) shall have tribulation. (John 16:33) From our perspective, tribulation is bad because it hurts. But, from the bigger perspective tribulation is NOT bad because it teaches us and it fulfills prophecy.

We must come to a state of "after - knowing", i.e., "repent". After knowing that tribulation does happen to good people, then we must never again think that a person was punished with tribulation because they were bad.

TRIBULATION IN OUR SCRIPTS

JESUS CHRIST had a script to walk out here on this earth. "In the volume of the book it is written of me to do thy will, O God.", he said. (Hebrews 10:7). JESUS script included the cross, and that sure was tribulation! There is also a volume, and there is a book, that contains a script for us to follow that was written by our GOD. The script contains HIS will, not our will. And the script says that we will also have tribulation. JESUS said so!

Here are a few people who have a script according to the Bible.

MOSES. God told Moses, the lawgiver, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." (Ex. 32:32)

DAVID. King DAVID said, "In thy book all my members were written -- when as yet there was none of them." (Psa. 139:16)

PAUL. Paul the apostle said that God gave him his script before the world began. (2 Tim. 1:9)

PRESENT UNBELIEVER. Concerning the script of those people who tamper with the word of God, John said, "God shall take away his part (his script) out of the book of life." (Rev. 22:19)

YOU and I, BELIEVERS. We keep our part (script) in the book of life, because we don't tamper with it. Moses, David, JESUS, Paul and you and I all have a script in our GOD'S book.

Paul was referring to his own script (book) when he said, "Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own PURPOSE (showbread) and grace, which (purpose - script) was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. 1:9). He had just said, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." (V. 8)

In context, when Paul referred to "GOD'S OWN PURPOSE which was given to us", Paul was thinking of two things, i.e., 1. being a prisoner and 2. partaker of afflictions. Sometimes the will of God is for us to be a prisoner or for us to partake of affliction, like God willed for Paul. Our scripts do not contain our will. The script surely was not written to satisfy OUR own purpose.

WHO WANTS THEIR SCRIPT NOW?

In fact, our scripts are often in opposition to our own wishes, own will, own desires and own purposes. JESUS magnificently said it this way. "O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: (let's rewrite the script), nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matt. 26:39)

If you are wondering why the will (SOUL) of JESUS was different from the will (SOUL) of his Father GOD, then this may help. WILL is a function of the SOUL. JESUS was GOD in flesh on the earth. When JESUS used to be GOD in heaven he did not have temporal will (SOUL) senses like sight, hearing, smelling, feeling, and tasting. Yes, he had SPIRITUAL (heavenly) senses, but those were not temporal (earthly) ones. When JESUS left heaven and came to earth he enjoyed the effect of his temporal SOUL senses so very much that he wanted to keep that feeling. In other words, JESUS did not want to die (lose his ability to see, hear, smell, taste and feel earthly things) because he found

something (his SOUL feelings) on earth that made him want to stay here. (Matt. 26:6-13, John 12:1-3)

A study of the differences between SPIRIT, SOUL and BODY will reveal why JESUS and his Father had different wills (SOULS). There is really no conflict, just different manifestations of the same God, one in heaven, and one on earth.

ALL THE WORLD IS A STAGE

As actors on a stage, we need to recognize that some of us are only walk ons, some received bit parts, some go through tribulation with feature parts and some received the "they lived happily ever after" parts. The casting director (God) made the decision as to who was best suited for each part. We didn't get to decide who got which part. We were assigned our own script. And we liked the idea way back then (that is in SPIRIT only).

But after we received our SOULS, after the time of our natural birth, we discovered that the "cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches" worked to choke out our desire to walk out the script that was assigned to us. (Matt. 13:22). Our relatively new found SOULISH experiences of JOY and/or PAIN made us want to manage and align the circumstances of our lives and the lives of people near us for our own purpose and benefit. The result was that our will (SOUL) became different from the script that was assigned to us.

In the play FIDDLER ON THE ROOF, Tevye, the poor milkman, projected the idea of wanting a script change when he prayed, "O God! Would it disturb some great eternal plan, if you would make me - a rich man?" That was great insight to know that there is an eternal plan of God. And it is hard to find fault with a poor milkman for wanting to be rich. But, if the great eternal plan of God is for Tevye to be poor, then he had better forget about becoming rich. Rich or poor, bond or free, tall or short, condemning or forgiving, there is reason for it all in the grand play that God wrote. After Christians know that our GOD wrote their own scripts, then there will be no real valid reason for them to FEAR the future. Then they will know that the future must be better for everyone.

A VERY LONG TIME AGO

In passing we should note that we Christians received his purpose before the world began. That makes us all very old (in SPIRIT, not in SOUL).

2 Tim. 1:9 tells us when it was that we received his purpose (our own scripts); "According to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ JESUS before the world began." The word "world" may cause a little confusion. In the Bible the word "world" doesn't always mean "the globe"; sometimes it means "age". It could mean that we received our scripts before the globe was formed. But, it could mean that we received our scripts before this present age.

We were just SPIRITS with our GOD, more than 6000 years ago. Way back then every one of us Christians did agree to receive our scripts, including the tribulation parts. We had no SOULS (minds) and no bodies way back then. So that is why we can not remember the event. But every once in a while the SOUL of man becomes quiet enough for the real SPIRIT man to remember parts of what went on. (Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7, Jeremiah 1:5) We call that "prophecy" and/or "word of knowledge".

GREAT ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD

When our scripts contain traumatic things that we don't want - we must walk them out anyway; because there is some great eternal purpose of God in our own personal tragedy.

There are many examples of that idea in the Bible, but the best and most representative example that I know of is, "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." (Matt. 2:18) This was when Herod killed all the children under two years of age, in an attempt to kill the baby JESUS.

PROPHECY WAS FULFILLED

Verse 17 tells us why God wrote the murders into the scripts of those babies and those mothers. "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet." It was to fulfill prophecy!

I believe that all those children and all those mothers agreed to their scripts over 6000 years ago when they were SPIRITS (not souls and not bodies). They received their scripts before the world (age) began. At that time they all said in SPIRIT, "I can handle that. It's a piece of cake." Little did they know, because before that time they never had a soul or body. They got those later, when they were born. At the time that they said "Yes" they had never experienced any earthly temporal emotion or sense of pleasure or pain because they did not yet have a SOUL or natural body. That's why they could say, "Yes" way back then. But, after enjoying life in this world they all lamented and wept and said, "No!"

From our perspective, it is tragic that babies had to die. What then is the answer to this question, "Is it best to die when a person is 2 months, 2 years, 20 years or 70 years old?" The big answer is that it is best to die when the script is over. That answer does not remove the pain but it does provide the reason.

Right now we can't see the forest because we are blinded by the trees. In other words our problems and victories are so big that they blind us from seeing the bigger truth, i.e., how our own problems and victories fit into the great eternal play that our GOD wrote. Let's pray that we will overcome the last enemy (death) and be around in the flesh (body and soul) at that last day of this age (the coming of the Lord). Then we will know why God wrote tribulation into the scripts of some people and why some others seem to lead "charmed" lives. Then it will be real easy to see that tribulation is not punishment. Then we'll see the big picture.

JESUS GOAL WAS FUTURE JOY

I have wondered what force motivated JESUS to say "Yes" to his script and then walk obediently to the cross. Here is the answer. "Who for the JOY that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." (Heb. 12:2) We all need a better understanding of the JOY that is set before us for the future, because we have our own form of tribulation to endure, too. Our problems are not as bad as the cross, but for some people they are pretty heavy. Following the example of JESUS, when we know all about that future JOY, we will be better able to endure the tribulation parts of our own script right now.

SUMMARY

The woman's illness that required surgery (You exchange the word "illness" to some tribulation in your own life) was not a punishment for something she did wrong in the past. It was either a tribulation to teach some important lesson for her good future or it was an important part of her script in the great plan of God. Pray for the lady.

While you are at it, please pray for us, too. This ministry does not exist apart from the gifts of our friends and readers.