

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 39, No.21, May 21, 2013 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."** (2 Peter 3:18)

Responding to a Tornado...



AS I AM SURE YOU KNOW: A tornado as large as a mile wide with winds up to 200 mph roared through the Oklahoma City suburbs Monday, flattening entire neighborhoods, setting buildings on fire and landing a direct blow on an elementary school. **Above, a woman carries her child** through a field near the collapsed Plaza Towers Elementary School in Moore, Okla., Monday, May 20.

[Above photo and info are from: http://weather.aol.com/2013/05/20/photos-massive-tornado-devastation-in-moore-oklahoma/?icid=maing-grid10%7Chtmlws-main-bb%7Cdl1%7Csec3_Ink1%26pLid%3D316110#photo=4]

Responding to Tragedy by Giving Money by [Jesse Johnson](#)

When I heard that a tornado in Oklahoma City killed over 50 people, many of whom were elementary students, I shuddered with sorrow. **How can a person hear that children died and entire neighborhoods were wiped out and not be affected?**



So I stopped and prayed.

I thanked the Lord for my own family's safety, **and I prayed** for those first-responders and teachers who were trying to rescue people. **I prayed** for the churches in the area, and asked that God would give them wisdom in how they respond. **I asked** that the pastors would have the ability to comfort, the elders would lead, **and that** God would use this for good by drawing people to himself. **And then I thought, how can I help? What can I do to help those in need, especially the believers who were affected? I read this passage:**

"Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" ([Luke 12:33-34](#)).

And then this one: "If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" ([1 John 3:17](#)).

But I don't own a rescue dog, and I don't even live in Oklahoma. How can I possibly apply those verses in times of tragedy? It is practically the American Way to donate to the Red Cross or other aid organizations. But is that what Jesus had in mind?

In the New Testament, when there were physical or practical needs in the church, they were met through the church. When there were poor in the congregation, the elders organized a system to care for their needs ([Acts 6:1-7](#); 1 Tim 5:9).

Believers obeyed Jesus' command and sold their excess goods to care for one another, but they didn't give the money to outside groups; they gave it to the church, through the church.

The early church met the physical needs of other believers by giving their money to their church (they literally laid it at the Apostle's feet), and then they allowed the elders to identify the most urgent needs to meet. And when there was famine or desperate poverty in distant lands, the strategy stayed the same. Believers pooled their money and gave it to their churches, who in turn passed it along to churches in need ([Rom 15:25-26](#); [1 Cor 16:1-3](#)).

The wisdom of this approach is obvious. How could a church in Galatia possibly know the most effective way to minister in Jerusalem? How could they really discern between those truly in need, and those whom charity would only further enable? Obviously they couldn't possibly be expected to know those things. But the elders of the church in Jerusalem would, so Paul wanted to collect the money and give it to the church, who would then give it to the poor.

The same is true today. Take the tragedy in Oklahoma yesterday. Do you want to help? That is good, and a sign of godliness. But how can you know who is in need? If you give to a secular organization, you are trusting your money to a group that obviously does not share your goal of reconciling the world to God through preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. How do you know which homeowners have insurance, and which don't? How do you know who is in desperate need? How do you possibly know who to give your money to? **The answer is simple.** The procedure Paul described in Romans 15 and 1 Corinthians 16 is still effective. **Here is how I suggest this should look:**

1. Churches should have a designated fund set up for disaster relief. Then when a disaster happens, they already have the procedure in place to receive money from their congregants to help meet the needs of those affected. That way people follow Paul's example and give directly to their own church as a way of ministering to those around the globe.

2. Churches should then send the money that was collected to like-minded churches in the affected area, for the purpose of meeting the material needs of their congregations. That puts the burden of discernment on the local elders, who are the ones best placed to know how to use the money. It is always a good principle to give your money to the godliest people who are closest to the need, and this accomplishes just that.

3. If you don't know of a like-minded church in the area (or if your church is not receiving money for something like this), consider giving funds to a group like [The Children's Hunger Fund](#). <http://www.chfus.org/>

They are one of the world's largest Christians charities, and they distribute their resources through a network of like-minded churches. This network is already established globally, and the churches who are part of it have been trained on how to respond in times of crisis. **CHF has as one of its main principles that the resources they give out go to churches, and that the local churches then take the lead on how to use/distribute them.** I have worked with them first-hand, and have seen the integrity they use in handling \$5 gifts as well as \$20,000 donations. I've seen them respond to fires in Los Angeles, the earthquake in Haiti, and typhoons in the Philippines. They have a legacy of maximizing their resources to strengthen affected churches, while furthering the advancement of the gospel.

Regardless of where you give your money, the goal should be the same: believers in parts of the world where there is excess should use their material blessings to alleviate physical suffering of believers while furthering the missionary efforts of the church. They only way I can think of doing that is **to follow the pattern set up by Paul, and get the resources into the hands of the churches in need.**

NOTE: TO ANYONE RECEIVING THIS NEWSLETTER: Southern Baptist Disaster Relief is an excellent way to get involved in relief efforts:
<http://www.namb.net/dr/>

Donations to Southern Baptist Disaster Relief: Southern Baptist Disaster Relief responds to disasters across the US and around the world. Donations are fully tax deductible and 100% of all gifts are used to meet the needs of hurting people in the wake of disasters. Donations can be made **online, by phone (866) 407-6262, or by mail** - checks should be made payable to "North American Mission Board" and sent to Disaster Relief Fund, P.O. Box 116543, Atlanta, GA 30368-6543.

FOR OUR CHURCH FELLOWSHIP AND ANYONE ELSE WHO SO DESIRES— FUNDS CAN BE SENT TO SOUTHSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH, P.O. BOX 1594, GALLATIN, TENNESSEE 37066. Make checks out to North American Mission Board (NAMB). We will send you a receipt and forward all funds to the NAMB... either directly or via the Bledsoe Baptist Association.

Disasters come in all sizes and shapes and strike in many different places: You may be an individual with skills and time options; and you would like to be equipped to do 'hands-on' Disaster Relief Ministry: The first step is REQUIRED TRAINING and direct connection to established Disaster Relief Ministries. State Baptist Conventions and/or Local Baptist Associations can walk you through that process. To inquire in Tennessee:
<http://www.tnbaptist.org/page.asp?page=103>

GOD'S HAND IN THE WIND AND THE STORM!

Jewish Rabbi Harold S. Kushner in his book WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE, (A book many turn to for their theology of suffering), reminds us that

insurance companies refer to earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and various other 'natural' disasters as "Acts of God!" **To that, Kushner declares**, "I consider that a case of using God's name in vain. I don't believe that an earthquake that kills thousands of innocent victims without reason is an act of God. It is an act of nature. Nature is morally blind, without values. It churns along, following its own laws, not caring who or what gets in the way." **Later, Kushner claims**, "It is too difficult even for God to keep cruelty and chaos from claiming innocent victims." Kushner's book is popular because he states what people want to believe. Multitudes cry out, "If God is of infinite love and power, how could He allow hurricanes, famines, tsunami devastation and more?" In trouble and tragedy the agonizing cries are genuine: **"Where is God?" "Why did he allow the tornado to hit the school in Oklahoma, etc?"**

THE FOLLOWING IS NOT AN ATTEMPT TO ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. It is, however, a look into Biblical revelation where we will find sufficient revelation to guide our hearts, minds, confessions and steps.

1. God is completely sovereign, and holy, and all powerful, and infinite in wisdom and perfect in love. (Psalm 62:11; 115:3; 135:6; Proverbs 21:1; Lam. 3:37-38; Romans 11:33)

"Nothing is too large or small to escape God's governing hand. The spider building its web in the corner and Napoleon marching his army across Europe are both under God's control."- Jerry Bridges. "Nothing, therefore, happens unless the Omnipotent wills it to happen; He either permits it to happen or He brings it about Himself."- Augustine.

IN SCRIPTURE nothing is attributed to fortune, fate, chance, luck or uncontrolled nature. Even that which man and/or satan and demons do are all absolutely under God's sovereign control. As R.C. Sproul has rightly stated, "There is not even one stray molecule in the universe!"

2. We live in a fallen and sin-cursed world where there are NO 'innocent victims'... we inhabit a once-perfect-but-now-GROANING, SUFFERING Earth. The disaster of all disasters is the disaster of human disobedience and now we daily see and experience the consequences of that disobedience. (Genesis 3:16-19; Romans 8:20-22; Romans 5:12) "While on earth, we will inevitably face the kinds of natural disasters that have become natural in a sinful world. We will experience pain, suffering, loss and lots of questions. But we can, through Christ, overcome whatever comes our way (Romans 8:35-39; Psalm 46:1-3) because, as Corrie ten Boom noted, **"There is no pit so deep that God is not deeper still."**

3. In spite of all the consequences of sin, we live in a world, (and a universe), where the One, the True and Living GOD ALMIGHTY does all of His GOOD PLEASURE! He is never arbitrary. He is never frustrated. He is perfectly full of joy; and no one nor nothing can hinder any of His good pleasure: (Romans 11:33-36; Psalm 33:7; 89:9; 107:29). **OF COURSE, we tend to think the world and all in it exists, (or should**

exist!), for our pleasure. We expect God to always be present to do all of our bidding and fulfill all of our desires. THUS, WHEN TROUBLE, TRIALS, TRIBULATIONS, PERSECUTIONS AND/OR 'NATURAL DISASTERS' come our way— we are quick to question the character of God. **However, the EARTH and all that is in it... is NOT ABOUT US— it is all ABOUT GOD and His good pleasure.** ONLY WHEN WE EMBRACE THIS TRUTH can we, {like Job!}, worship God in the midst of calamity and in the midst of extreme and unexplained ADVERSITY! The world, the universe and all therein belong to God. **He is the MASTER POTTER. We are the clay.** He is the Righteous One. We are unrighteous. He has the total right to do as HE pleases. Because of who HE is— whether He expresses His holy wrath or His mercy, He is NEVER unrighteous! HE IS GOD— of course, He brings or allows things we do not understand. But His way is perfect. He always does that which is righteous. **O COME LET US WORSHIP!** (Romans 9:14-22; 11:33-36; Job 1:20-22; 2:9-11)

4. We also live in a world where all aspects of NATURE, (earthquakes, storms, etc), are subject to God's SOVEREIGN CONTROL: Psalm 147:15-18; 148:8-13; Matthew 5:45. You will note that Psalm 148:8 speaks of the, **"STORMY WIND FULFILLING HIS WORD!"** **MOREOVER, WITHOUT QUESTION... GOD WORKS THROUGH THE FORCES OF NATURE TO BRING JUDGMENT TO THE EARTH: Psalm 78:43-51; Revelation 6-18!**

NOTE: In a fallen world, there are many different kinds of **STORMY WINDS:**

a. The Strong Wind of Theological Controversy: **"If Paul** had not withstood Peter to his face at Antioch, it seems probable that, humanly speaking, Christ's Church would never have exceeded the dimensions of a Jewish sect. **If Athanasius** had not opposed Arius of Alexandria, [who denied the deity of Christ], it is difficult to see how, but for a miraculous intervention, the Church would have continued to teach the Divinity of Christ. **If Augustine** had allowed Pelagius... to pass uncontradicted, western Christendom at least would have ceased to believe that we are SAVED BY GRACE..." (Henry Liddon) REALITY: In a fallen world there MUST BE those who will stand up for Biblical truth: 2 Timothy 3:1-17; 4:1-4.

b. The Literal Stormy Winds fulfill God's Word: Be it a hurricane, volcano, earthquake, tornado, or whatever— there are great lessons to be learned, EVEN THOUGH we may still have questions we cannot answer:

1. We are utterly dependent upon God. Let us love, worship and serve Him!

2. We dare not ask for justice! For justice would send tornados upon all of us for starters... and then to hell for eternity.

3. Let our lips be filled with PRAISE to God for His mercy; and let us know that His goodness to us is a call to repentance! (Romans 2:4)

4. PRESENT CALAMITIES should wean us from this world; and cause us be URGENT about serving Christ today, laying up treasures in heaven; and longing for heaven: Matthew 6:19; Revelation 21:1-5.

5. Those who are smitten by the hurricane, tornado or whatever ARE IN NO WAY worse sinners than we. IF WE WERE passed by from such calamity— then, we are left with the call of JESUS to repent! (Luke 13:1-5) THE REAL QUESTION IS THIS: “Why has God been so merciful to me?” All calamities and disaster... and all of the suffering of the ANIMAL KINGDOM should remind us of the awfulness of sin’s consequences— not of someone’s particular sin... rather, AWE that, again, God has been so merciful to us. Moreover, we should be moved to a deeper PERSONAL HATRED of sin and a deeper worship of GOD who sent His only Son to pay our sin debt!

6. Ultimately, DEATH is never an accident. Death is always a judgment, a common effect of sin. Thus, we all live in dread of death... Only the death and resurrection of Christ can set the captive free! (Romans 6:23)

7. ALL CALAMITY should remind us that, “We know not what a day will bring forth!”— therefore, let us be faithful to JESUS today! AND AS SET FORTH IN THE FIRST SECTION OF THIS NEWSLETTER— Disaster and Calamity offers the Christian many opportunities to minister the comfort of Christian compassion, kindness and love: 2 Corinthians 1:3-6; James 1:26; 2:15-16.

BOTTOM LINE: I have a photo of a tornado...clipped from the front page of Billy Graham’s DECISION MAGAZINE from the late 1950s or early 1960s. On the photo are these wise words: ***“Disasters are a miniature picture of future judgment and remind men that death is inevitable!”*** GOD IS CALLING US, THE LIVING, TO REPENTANCE! He is calling us to a holy soberness: ***“Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling!”*** (Psalm 2:11)

(The above was mostly edited from a 1992 Grow in Grace Newsletter... which drew from an number of sources in preparation)

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES for May!

1. WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM! / YOUTH: Wednesdays, 6-8pm @ Southside Church building!

2. Thursdays @ 6:30pm: OUTREACH

3. Saturdays @ 8am: Men’s Fellowship/Bible Study

May 24— Senior Banquet, SCS Graduation and Awards Night!

IN THE CHURCH AUDITORIUM:

(1) EVERYONE is invited beginning at 6:30PM, as we honor Autry Stanley.

(2) 7:00PM is Kindergarten Graduation;

(3) Followed by AWARDS for SCS students.

(4) The climax will be Autry's High School Graduation.

SUNDAY SCHEDULE FOR MAY 26

1. 9:30am- Sunday School 2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children's Church

3. Noon Fellowship Meal {Covered Dish}

4. 1:00pm Early Afternoon Service: A church family Conversation II:

SPECIAL NOTE: We need to have a FOLLOW UP on our Recent Church-wide CONVERSATION. There were several important matters we did not get to discuss.

1. A suggestion coming from our deacons' meeting of better CARING for all members and those attending... especially making sure that widows/widowers/shut-ins, etc... are cared for. **2. A servant team** to lead us in the care of the church facilities. **3. A follow-up as to Sunday service options.** **4. Some are wondering as to whether or not there is a vision for a re-start of AWANA or something similar... or...**

Grace to all! James Bell /www.southsidegallatin.org