

(Suggested Subfolder: Prayer and Devotional)

200 "Why, oh why?"

On a Friday morning fifty years ago a massive spoil-tip from the local coal mine, that had been steadily piled up over the decades above the village of Aberfan, suddenly gave way. 150,000 tons of rock and mud poured down the hillside without warning, engulfing houses and the local primary school below. 144 people lost their lives, 116 being children. The tragedy shook the world, transformed the life of that community forever, and swept away the Christian faith of many, many people: "If there is this great God of love, why does He allow an unspeakable horror like this?". It's a fair question, and a very old question, especially as we look around this world of such misery today.

Pat answers are most certainly not welcome. Yet as we each try feebly to seek the Lord in our grief when we are willing to do so, the old God-explained framework, given to us in His God-revealed Word, comes to our aid. It is a sort of comfort straightaway to realise that all of our anguish, anger and questions reside within that framework.

We know that Almighty God our Creator most definitely does exist. We know why He bothered to create this creation - out of delight, love, and His desire for fellowship and mutual joy. We know that He entrusted Man as steward set over this, His wonderful creation. We know that He described His finished creation as "very good" (Genesis 1.31). By the end of Genesis Chapter 2 the scene is set for a precious relationship between the Creator and His creation. Let us never forget that that is what the Lord God produced, and wanted, and wants, and will achieve once again through His Son Jesus Christ (eg., Colossians 1.1-20 / I Corinthians 15.21-28).

So the state of things right now is far from what God wishes, and the change has come about because of human sin. Eve and Adam were enticed, and turned away from the Lord and His ways to themselves and their own ways - just as Satan, a wonderful created being who the Lord had entrusted with great authority, had done so himself (eg Isaiah 14.12-15).

Because of this entrance into creation of "sin" - that is, any form of defiance against the Creator - everything changed. (To save the word-count), you might check for yourself about: Satan (Genesis 3.14); life for Adam and Eve (vv 16-19); creation itself (Romans 8.20,21); sin's arrival (eg., I Corinthians 15.21-22); innocent blood being shed (Genesis 3.21 / 9.4-6); the diet, and blood (Genesis 1.29-30 / 9.1-6); and the Garden (Genesis 3.22-24).

Herein lies the key to today's miseries. Some are caused directly by man's sin (the dreadfulness in the Middle East); some by man's folly (Aberfan, plane crashes); and some by the present fallenness of creation (both "natural disasters" and disease in its various causes and forms). Creation is hurting, desperately, and longs for relief.

And of course, God as Creator does bear responsibility. He chose to make this creation "real". His placing of divine love at its heart and His seeking of creation's love in return involved risk, because love, by its very nature, is voluntary. Man disobeyed, abusing the Creator's love, and creation has paid the price ever since.

Is God bothered? In that miserable scene in the garden that evening, He promised redemption - "the seed of the woman" (Genesis 3.15) - and ever since, running through all the heartaches, there was that thread of Hope.

The Messiah has come, just as promised. His salvation-enabling work is achieved - "It is finished!". The Creator has indeed acknowledged His full responsibility, by doing everything necessary, at appalling cost to Himself, to open the way back into that Garden for any of us to take.

He is still the God whose ways are often past our own understanding (eg. Isaiah Chapter 55). We will still often know tears and puzzlement (John 11.21,32 / 16.33 / Luke 24.21a / Acts 7.54-60 / II Corinthians 12.7-10 /). For it is still a real, fallen creation, with the presence of real love and hate, real good and evil, real right and wrong, and with God's full, final redemptive work through His Son yet to reach its fulfilment.

But meanwhile, if we find ourselves pulling the body of a child from a buried school or from the waves of the Mediterranean, or sitting with a dear one dying from cancer with no apparent response to our prayers, we weep and we trust. Even in the midst of everything, we can struggle through to giving thanks, in the simple, enormous knowledge that, by God's love in Christ, all is being put back to how things were, and will be once again (Isaiah 11.1-9 / Romans 8 / Revelation 21.1-7).

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