

OUR RESPONSE REMAINS THE SAME

by Terrence Koch

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The World Trade Center Towers are completely destroyed. A section of the Pentagon is massively damaged. An airliner and its passengers crash, its mission unknown. Presumably thousands of lives are lost.

Whenever tragic events occur the questions are asked, some against God Himself. Why would God allow this to happen? What did these people do to deserve this? These questions have been asked throughout history. In fact, Jesus himself was urged to answer these questions:

Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them--do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

(Luke 13:1-5 NIV)

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary concerning these verses has an eerie ring today:

[Christ] spoke of [an] event, which . . . gave an instance of people taken away by sudden death. Towers, that are built for safety, often prove to be men's destruction. He cautioned his hearers not to blame great sufferers, as if they were therefore to be accounted great sinners. As no place or employment can secure from the stroke of death, we should consider the sudden removals of others as warnings to ourselves. On these accounts Christ founded a call to repentance. The same Jesus that bids us repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, bids us repent, for otherwise we shall perish.

When questioned about why God allows certain tragic events to happen, Christians shouldn't be ashamed to answer, "I don't know." God never promises Christians that they will have special insight into the entirety of His

will. What we can be confident of are two things:

1. Scriptures promise that God works all things for the good of those who trust in Him. However tough things seem to be, how terrible they appear, if you are a Christian, God is using the situation to form you into the likeness of Christ and to build your trust in Him.

2. We live in a sinful world. The sin of Adam allowed sin to enter the world. That sin is evident in the hearts of all men, as well as the sometimes destructive aspect of nature itself. Sin is anything that distances us from God, so it should be of no surprise that as we distance ourselves from the source of our protection, tragedies like this will happen. The only proper response to God, as Jesus said and Henry reiterated, is to repent of our sin. Yes, prayer is important and necessary. All Christians should pray during times of tragedy. Yet, when evil is far from us, we need to repent. When evil is at our doorsteps, we need to repent.

This morning on ABC a gentleman involved with the building of the World Trade Center made the comment that when people ask, "Why did the buildings fall down?" they are asking the wrong question. Instead, he believed they should be asking, "How did the buildings initially remain standing?"

The same could be said of our questions about God. We are quick to ask, "Why did God allow this?" However, an honest look at the world and an examination of our own hearts should make us aware of the sin that exists in this world and within ourselves. As we become increasingly aware of this sin, we realize we are asking the wrong question. We should be asking, "How can God be so patient that He allows us to live?"

In these days we need to thank God that He is good.