SUBJECT

TEXT

TITLE "A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY"

SCRIPTURE READING Job 10:2-3a

DELIVERIES: Date Hour Place
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

CLASSIFICATION:
- EXPOSITORY
- BIOGRAPHICAL
- TEXTUAL
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- DEVOTIONAL

Results and Comments:
(XXX+++) 3 L., 1 Red.;
SCRIPTURE: Job 10:2-3a

INTRO: BLAISE PASCAL ONCE SAID THAT IT IS THE FATE OF GOD TO BE EVERLASTINGLY MISUNDERSTOOD. THERE IS NO AREA OF LIFE WHERE THIS IS MORE COMMON THAN WITH THE PROBLEMS OF SUFFERING, SORROW, DISEASE, AND DISASTER. WHEN TRAGEDY COMES WE ALMOST INSTINCTIVELY CRY OUT, "WHY HAS GOD DONE THIS TO ME?" OR, SOME WELL-MEANING FRIEND WILL INFORM US THAT WHAT HAS HAPPENED IS "THE WILL OF GOD." THE MOST HORRIBLE OF TRAGEDIES ARE LABELED "ACTS OF GOD."

SERIOUSLY NOW, DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE GOD WHO CREATED US IN HIS IMAGE, WHO GIVES US ALL THINGS RICHLY TO ENJOY, WHO IDENTIFIES HIMSELF AS "OUR FATHER," AND WHO SENT HIS SON JESUS CHRIST TO DIE ON THE CROSS IN OUR PLACE--DO YOU SERIOUSLY BELIEVE THAT GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF ALL THE SICKNESS AND SORROW OF THE WORLD?

IT IS SO EASY TO BLAME GOD FOR ALL OF THE WORLD'S HEARTACHE. COULD IT BE THAT THERE IS A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY? COULD IT BE THAT HE IS NOT THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TROUBLES AND DISASTERS THAT CREEP ACROSS OUR PLANET? COULD IT BE THAT WE HAVE BEEN BLAMING THE WRONG PERSON ALL ALONG?

THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT THIS IS PRECISELY THE CASE. GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF SORROW AND SUFFERING. CALAMITY IS NOT HIS DELIBERATE HANDIWORK. DISEASE IS NOT HIS MAKING. DON'T LET ANYONE CONFUSE YOU--GOD IS NOT IN THE BUSINESS OF TROUBLE-MAKING. HIS WORD SAYS SO: (LAM. 3:33)

"FOR HE DOTH NOT AFFLICT WILLINGLY NOR GRIEVE THE CHILDREN OF MEN."

THEREFORE, WHEN JOB (10:2-3a) ACCUSES GOD OF CONDEMNING AND OPPRESSING HIM, IT IS A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY. LIKE JOB WE HAVE ALL BEEN GUILTY OF THIS. WE SHALL BE ABLE TO COPE MORE SUCCESSFULLY WITH SUFFERING WHEN WE CLEAR UP THIS MATTER.

In This Case of Mistaken Identity of mist. id.

Notice:

I. AN INDICTMENT (THAT IS MADE)

--NOTE: If God is not the cause of our suffering, who is to blame? Someone must be
indicted.

Read again the classic experience of Job, especially the first two chapters, and you will see. When Job's troubles came, his wife, his friends, and eventually even Job--everybody involved--blamed God. But that was because they did not know any better. They did not have access to all the facts. They could not see behind the scenes.

But we do know better. We have been given the benefit of divine revelation. And one of the lessons of life that we learn from Job is that much of our suffering comes not from God but rather from Satan.

It was not God who troubled Job; it was Satan. It was Satan who took away his finances and his family. It was Satan who destroyed his health.

--NOTE: It was God who gave Job all that he had in the first place. It was God who, when this distressing experience was over, gave Job twice as much as he had before. Why, in heaven's name would God then have taken it all away from him? Ultimately, we need to see God not as the cause of our problems, but as the Source of our strength and hope and ability to cope with them.

I cannot believe that God reaches down, slightly twists the wheel of a school bus, and watches it crash through a guardrail, killing little children. I cannot believe that God draws a red pencil line through a city and sends a tornado to kill innocent people and leave hundreds homeless.

I do not believe that God plants cancer in the bone of a little child or a young mother and then stands back with arms folded to watch life slowly waste away.

To believe that God is the Author of all of our troubles is to hold Him responsible for sin and the worst kinds of tragedies. If I believed that about God, then I would want to have nothing to do with Him, nothing whatever.

--ILLUS: My friend in Shannon Hospital who was told, "God is trying to teach you something"...

No, God is not the cause of suffering and those who think He is are involved in a case of mistaken identity!
I. AN INDICMENT (That Is Planned)

---Jesus and Suffering: On one occasion Jesus was teaching in the meetinghouse on the Sabbath Day. There was present a woman who had been crippled for eighteen years, and Jesus healed her. He was criticized for healing her on the Sabbath Day. But notice how He defended His action:

>"Here is a woman, a daughter of Abraham, who has been kept prisoner by Satan for eighteen years. Was it wrong for her to be freed from her bonds on the Sabbath?" (Luke 13:16, NEB)

Did Jesus apologize to the woman for her illness as though He or God were responsible? Did He blame the physician who had unsuccessfully tried to help her? No. He said that Satan had held her prisoner for eighteen years.

There you have it! There's the guilty party! I think you know by now who it was that first brought trouble to this planet and has been peddling it ever since.

Do you still have doubts? Look then at the end of time. In heaven there will be no tears, no sorrow, no pain, and no death (Rev. 21:4). This shows that evil and suffering are not a part of God's perfect will for us. Jesus looked on disease and death as intruders and aliens in God's kingdom. He did not regard God as their Author. Neither should we. Christ brings an indictment against Satan as the cause of suffering.

---Job 1:9 "Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, 'Doth Job fear God for nought?'"

---NOTE: From this point on, Satan is out to destroy Job. He plans an intrigue. Webster defines "intrigue" as "a plot or scheme, a trick to gain a desired end." And Satan has the power and skill to devise quite a scheme. He is called:

---II Cor. 4:4a "The god of this world."
---Eph. 2:2b "The prince of the power of the air."

---NOTE: It is his purpose to discredit the name of God and to destroy our faith in Him. In the pursuit of this goal he will use anything and anybody he can. He uses..."
bodily pain and afflictions, death and disaster, our children, troubled marriages, and even economic reversals. Whatever irritates and separates, whatever discourages and destroys, Satan will use. His primary purpose is to obstruct and to oppose all that is good and spiritual.

He works primarily through deceit and misrepresentation. He is, in fact, the master of deceit, the father of all lies, who masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). Watch him, as he will come to you under the guise of doing you good when in reality he wants to do you in.

His greatest act of deceit is to convince people that he doesn't even exist. Many people regard Satan as a part of the nursery furniture of history—in the same class as the Easter Bunny, the tooth fairy, and Santa Claus.

Remarkable, isn't it? Second only to the way he deceives us concerning his own existence is the way he uses suffering and sorrow to discredit God. He is so cunning that he causes sorrow and God gets the blame.

When have you ever heard Satan blamed for tragedy and for disaster? It is always the character of God that is called into question. Evil and suffering have placed more question marks over the good name of God than anything else in this world.

If Satan can cause an accident, give a person cancer, or take the life of a little child in order to discredit God and to destroy our faith, he will gladly do it. And when he does nobody ever cries out, "Why has Satan done this to me?" No one ever labels it as an "act of Satan" and no one ever calls it the "will of the devil." Do you see how cunning, how clever, he is? He causes most of our troubles and God gets the blame. What an intrigue! What a scheme! What a trick! And men are deceived by it!

III. AN INSIGHT (That Is Gained)

--NOTE: Through suffering we can gain insight; insight into the many reasons for suffering.
I. INDICTMENT

1. The Will of Man
   --James 1:14 "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of HIS OWN lust and enticed."
   --NOTE: Our own will and deliberate choices are the causes of much that distresses us.
   --APPLY: True, Satan is the instigator of evil. But he has not power to force us to do wrong. He can tempt, but he can’t make us yield. He can harrass, but he cannot contaminate without our permission. We decide. Lest I be misunderstood let me remind you that though Satan is the ultimate instigator of all evil, he is not the direct cause of all our troubles. Some of them we manufacture ourselves. We live in a moral universe where we reap what we have sown.

2. The Woes of Heredity
   --NOTE: Other suffering is due to heredity. Some people are born with weaker bodies that are more susceptible to heart attacks, cancer, and other infirmities, i.e. Baldness...

3. The Wickedness of Others
   --II Timothy 4:14a (Paul) "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil."
   --NOTE: Some sorrow results from the actions of others. The good others do splashes on us and so does the evil.

4. The World of Imperfection
   --NOTE: Ours is an imperfect world. Pain, sorrow, loss, disease and grief are part of living in this imperfect world.

5. The "Wiles" of Satan
   --Eph. 6:11 "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the WILES of the devil."
   (L.B.) "All the strategies and tricks (intrigue) of Satan."

   (1) Doubt
   --NOTE: How does Satan work today? For one thing, he creates doubt to lead us to disobedience. Creation had hardly begun when Satan appeared on the scene to raise question marks
in the minds of Adam and Eve about the truthfulness of God. By creating doubt he led them into disobedience and punishment.

This disobedience unleashed the forces of evil in the world from which we have not yet recovered. The shock waves are still being felt to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Satan still tries to get us to doubt God's Word so we will sin against Him. 

Trials

--NOTE: Through all the trials and tragedies Satan had brought upon Job, he was seeking to separate Job from his devotion to God.

--ILLUS: Satan shakes and sifts us to separate us from God. On the night of His betrayal Jesus warned Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31).

The word sift refers to the winnowing process that was used in Jesus' day to separate grain from its husks. Jesus warned Peter that that was what Satan wanted to do to him. Satan wanted to shake Peter and his faith in order to separate him from his devotion to the Lord. Satan succeeded temporarily, as he led Peter to deny his Lord that very night.

Years later, out of his own bitter experience Peter writes, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Satan was no myth to Peter. And he should not be one to us.

Hypocrisy

--NOTE: Satan also wants to indwell us and make us hypocrites.

--ILLUS: Barnabas was a generous and a benevolent leader in the New Testament church who sold all of his possessions
III. INSIGHT (That is Gained)

and gave the entire price of them to the work of God. Others in the church saw his example and were inspired by it. Among them was a couple, Ananias and Sapphira. They too sold their possessions with the intent of giving everything to God and His work. But before they could complete the transaction, Satan entered into their hearts and convinced them that they could just pretend to give everything to the church while keeping a part of it for themselves, and no one would ever know the difference.

The Holy Spirit revealed their deceit to Peter and he confronted them with their sin by asking, "Ananias, why hast Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost...?" (Acts 5:3)

Satan, the great deceiver, wants to lead us into dishonesty, and hypocrisy also, if he can. He will indwell us and make us extensions of his own deceit and evil if we will allow him to do so.

(4) Hinderances

--NOTE: Satan seeks to hinder us. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, expressing his desire to visit with them, but he added, "Satan hindered us" (1 Thes. 2:18). The word hindered is a technical word which means to throw up a roadblock, to try to stop the progress of an oncoming army. In the days before TNT, tanks, and bazookas, the best ways to retard the progress of an army were to burn the bridges and to create avalanches across its path. In this way an army would be slowed down, hindered in its progress.

--ILLUS: Satan is in the roadblocking business. He will do anything he
can to hinder you and me as we try to make progress in Christian service. It is impossible for us to make resolutions about our Christian lives and then to carry out those resolutions without Satan putting obstacles in our way to divert us, to hinder us. If a person resolves to begin a regular devotional life, become an active witness for Christ, and become faithful in church attendance, invariably something will come up. You know what that something is? It's a roadblock placed there by Satan to hinder one from carrying out that resolution, those good intentions.

IV. AN ENIGMA (That Is Faced)

--NOTE: If Satan can do so much damage and bring so much suffering and if God is stronger than Satan, WHY DOESN'T GOD DESTROY THE DEVIL?

--ANSWER: The best answer I know to that question is that God has made us like Himself, that is free to make our own choices in life. Choices require options, and options necessitate the existence of the evil one. God does not want us to love Him and serve Him because we have no other choice.

The only alternative to allowing Satan to exist would be for God to have created us as robots with no choice at all, or as animals with extremely limited choices. But making us in His own image, with the freedom to choose between right and wrong, necessitated Satan's being here.

God will destroy Satan at the end of time—but in the meantime we must contend with him. Until then the Lord will empower us so that neither temptation nor tribulation will overcome us, if we depend on Him, if we build upon the "ROCK!"

CON: As Job remained faithful and true to God in the severest times of trial, so we can remain true to God also. We don't have to yield to temptation. We don't have to become bitter.
resentful, or angry. We don't have to strike out at others. We don't have to give in to self-pity. We can have strength immediately and we are assured of victory ultimately.

So the next time trouble comes into your life and you are tempted to say, "Why has God done this to me?" Don't! Don't call tragedy the will of God when it may not be. Don't be guilty of making a "Mistaken Identity."

Today respond to the Christ's invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Resource: When The Hurt Won't Go Away by Paul W. Powell.
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