

Tsunami

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Over 200,000 people have died recently from a Tsunami generated by a tremendous level 9.0 earthquake near Sumatra, Indonesia. My in-laws live in Jakarta, Indonesia- undoubtedly they knew of people that have been affected by this hardship. Many people must be wondering, “How could a loving God allow such suffering to happen to *good* people?” Let’s bring the question closer to home, since likely few of us have loved ones that have been affected by this disaster: “How could a *loving* God allow suffering into my life when I am basically a *good* person?” The keys to the question are in two words: “loving” and “good”.

One religious man came to Jesus and asked him,

“*Good* teacher, what *good* thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”¹

Jesus began answering by stating,

“Why do you call Me *good*? No one is *good* but One, that is, God.”

What standards do we use when we say that we are good? Jesus alone was able to declare that He fulfilled every letter of the Law of Moses- He perfectly obeyed every commandment of God². Jesus challenged the man about his own goodness by questioning the man about whether he had kept the 10 Commandments. The rich religious person declared that he kept all the commandments: he hadn’t murdered, committed adultery, stolen, lied; he honored his mother and father and loved his neighbor as himself. Jesus didn’t challenge these, but knowing what would pierce the man’s conscience, Jesus then addressed the 1st, 2nd and 10th commandments in this man’s life: idolatry and covetousness:

“Jesus said to him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’”³

The man left Jesus with a pierced conscience, sorrowful and unwilling to make the commitment. He left Jesus convicted but unchanged.

The 10 commandments pierce our consciences like nothing else. Is that why activist judges are so eager to remove them from our courthouses and public schools? How do you stand morally before the 10 commandments? Are you “good” in the eyes of God? Let’s look at a few of them...

¹ Matthew 19:16

² Matthew 5:17-18

³ Matthew 19:21

1. Murder: a person is a murderer if he murders just one person. Have you ever murdered someone? Likely you haven't physically killed anyone, but have you killed them in your thoughts or words? Jesus said, "I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment... whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."⁴ Jesus commanded: "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."⁵ Jesus commanded us to forgive men their trespasses⁶ and to "do unto others what you would have others do unto you."⁷ Have you murdered according to Jesus' standard? Doesn't that make you a murderer in God's eyes? I know I'm guilty of breaking the 6th commandment- that makes me a murderer.
2. Adultery: the Bible declares that only the marriage bed is holy and that God will judge the adulterer and fornicator⁸. Jesus' perfect standard for sex is purity "till death do us part."⁹ But what is adultery in God's eyes? Jesus said, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."¹⁰ All of us of age are certainly adulterers and adulteresses according to the standards of Jesus.
3. Stealing: If we have ever taken anything that isn't ours- regardless of the value, we have stolen- taking a pen from work, clocking in late, fudging on taxes... God has made us stewards of time, talents and treasures which He has given us, and expects us to invest them for His glory.¹¹ Have you always used what God has given you- your finances, abilities and time to His glory, or have you stolen from God? Jesus warned about the "unprofitable servant" who squandered the resources given him, stating that he would be taken to the "outer darkness" where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth."¹² All of us, according to God's standards, are thieves.
4. Bearing false witness: have you ever told a lie, even a "white lie"? Have you exaggerated the truth or misled someone through your words? Jesus' standard of integrity is: "Let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."¹³ Has your speech always been completely truthful? Each of us has bore false witness. We all are liars.
5. Idolatry: Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, and He replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."¹⁴ This summarized the first 4 commandments. To do anything less is idolatry- putting something in our lives as more important than God. We've all

⁴ Matthew 5:21-22

⁵ Matthew 5:44

⁶ Matthew 6:14

⁷ Matthew 7:12

⁸ Hebrews 13:14

⁹ Matthew 19:8-9

¹⁰ Matthew 5:28

¹¹ Matthew 25:15-33

¹² Matthew 25:30

¹³ Matthew 5:37

¹⁴ Matthew 22:37

committed idolatry- and blasphemy as well- using God's name in an irreverent way, breaking the 4th commandment.

Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of his day who had an outward appearance of righteousness,

“On the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”¹⁵

God is very concerned with our heart: our thoughts, motives and attitudes.

On judgment day,

“He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts.”¹⁶

“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”¹⁷

What if we were able to attach a new technology hearing aid to your ear that was able to record your every thought, word and deed for a whole week and then had all your friends, family and co-workers listen to it- would you be proud or ashamed of what they heard? Would everything they heard be “good”? Now consider that God will perfectly judge your every thought, motive and deed from the day you were born until your death- will you be declared “good” according to God's standards?

The prophet Isaiah saw the majesty of the Lord's holiness at His throne in a vision and fell apart.

“Woe to me!” I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.’”¹⁸

A sheep grazing in a green field looks clean, but when you take that same sheep and put it in a field covered with snow, the sheep no longer looks white. That's what happens when we compare ourselves to the standards of God and not to man's standards of righteousness.

Search your heart now and be honest with yourself: Have you lied, stolen, lusted, murdered and blasphemed in your heart? Have you ever dishonored your mother and father through your words or behavior? Is lying, stealing, lusting, blaspheming and unrighteous anger a serious crime in God's eyes? The Bible says,

¹⁵ Matthew 23:28

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 4:5

¹⁷ Hebrews 4:13

¹⁸ Isaiah 6:5

“The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone,”¹⁹

and “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”²⁰

The Bible also warns,

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.”²¹

Has your conscience been pricked by reviewing God’s perspective on the 10 Commandments? You may be saying, “God is a good God, therefore He will forgive me.” Because God is good (that is, He is holy, righteous and just) He must condemn sin. Light cannot mix with darkness. Justice demands a payment for sin.

The Bible says,

“God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.”²² “He has prepared His throne for judgment.”²³

David said, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight- that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.”²⁴

If a judge in a court of law had indisputable evidence of a bank robbery, yet let the criminal go, he would not be considered a “good” judge, but rather unjust. In the same way, God must condemn our sin, or He is unrighteous. A price must be paid for our sin.

The commandments of God are essential to bringing us to a point of realizing that our good works won’t merit us heaven. The Bible says that through the 10 Commandments

“every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.”²⁵

The 10 commandments are holy, pure and just, but they can never save us. God’s word says about the 10 Commandments,

“The Law brings about wrath.”²⁶

¹⁹ Revelation 21:8, cf. Gal 5:17-21, 1 John 3:9-10, Rev 22:15, Eph 5:5, 1 Pet 4:3-5, Col 3:5-6

²⁰ 1 John 3:15

²¹ 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

²² Psalm 7:11

²³ Psalm 9:7

²⁴ Psalm 51:4

²⁵ Romans 3:19

The 10 Commandments are a mirror into our soul, revealing our utter sinfulness. In light of God's standard, even our best is filthy. The prophet Isaiah lamented,

“We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.”²⁷

God's purpose in the 10 Commandments is to break our pride that we may find salvation, not by good works, but by the free gift given by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says that God's law is a

“tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”²⁸

The Gospel - Good News

The great news is that God has provided for all mankind forgiveness of sin by humbling Himself, becoming a man, and sacrificially dying in our place. The sacrifice was a perfect sacrifice, for Jesus lived a perfect life, and thus His blood shed in our place perfectly pays the price for our sin. The prophet Isaiah was one of many prophets who prophesied 700 years before Christ became a man about this great news of the Savior who would die in our place,

“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken... Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed [those who place their faith in Him], He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul [our salvation through His death], and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify [to declare innocent] many, for He shall bear their iniquities... He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many.”²⁹

God has provided a way to declare you “not guilty” by paying the price for your sin. Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for the sin of the world. His sacrifice was a perfect sacrifice, capable of forgiving all our sin.

So how do we receive forgiveness of sin? Simply through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation from eternal condemnation is a gift- it is “grace”- an undeserved favor.

²⁶ Romans 4:15

²⁷ Isaiah 64:6

²⁸ Galatians 3:24

²⁹ Isaiah 53:1-12

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace...”³⁰

We can be “justified” before a holy God- declared “not guilty”, “acquitted” of all our sin, for Jesus paid the price.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”³¹ How do we receive the gift?

“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”³²

Jesus made this promise,

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”³³

How can a person know that they are saved? Did you come to a point in your life when you truly became aware that you were a sinner destined for hell? Did you repent of all your sin [turn your back on your sin], believe in the Lord Jesus Christ’s sacrifice in your place and follow after Him? The Bible says that something happens to a person the moment there is a genuine conversion- they become purchased (redeemed) by Christ’s blood and the Holy Spirit takes up permanent residence in their hearts.

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.”³⁴

Do you know you are saved from eternal condemnation? Does the Holy Spirit bear witness in your heart today? Has there been a genuine change in your life since your conversion? If not, today can be a first for you- cry out to Him in genuine repentance and confession of faith and you will be saved.

Indeed, the question,

“How can a loving God allow evil in the world?” is the wrong question.

Rather, we should ask,

³⁰ Romans 3:23-24

³¹ Romans 6:23

³² Romans 10:23

³³ John 5:24

³⁴ Ephesians 1:13-14, cf. Rom 8:9,16, 10:17, 1 Cor 6:19, 2 Cor 1:22, 5:5, Ac 15:18, Eph 4:30

“How could a just God forgive sinners of their sin?”

It wasn't God's sin that brought death and suffering into this world, but man's sin. The Bible says,

“Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”³⁵

We are the ones that have “pooped” in our own nest, and will get justice if we don't cry out in repentance for God's mercy and grace, found at the cross.

What a wonderful mystery the blood of Christ is that has forgiven me of all my sin! Truly we see in the cross the love of God for an undeserving world. The Bible says,

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly [that's you and me]. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”³⁶

Our loving God has given us His all- will we in return give our lives over to Him? Jesus said,

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God...the Son of Man must be lifted up [to the cross], that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already [by the 10 Commandments, as we have seen], because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”³⁷

It's time- if you have never repented of all sin and placed your faith, your trust and your life in the hands of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, today is the day to start a new life. The light of God's Law has shone in your heart and revealed your utter sinfulness. No other religion offers a solution to that utter darkness- no other religion has a sinless Savior who died for you and demonstrated the acceptance of that sacrifice by rising from the dead. It is time you turned to the Savior, confess your sins and call out on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

³⁵ Romans 5:12

³⁶ Romans 5:6-8

³⁷ John 3:15-21

Jesus said,

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”³⁸

The Bible plainly warns,

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”³⁹

You have today- you don't know if you'll have tomorrow. The 200,000 who died in the Tsunami thought they would have a tomorrow, and they perished. There were some who came to Jesus and reported about how Pilate had killed some Galileans. Jesus' answer was a warning,

“Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”⁴⁰

The Bible warns,

“Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.”⁴¹

The prophet Joel prophesied about a soon coming day,

“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people.”⁴²

Are you ready for Judgment Day? Let the Lord Jesus Christ be your shelter today and rest forever in the forgiveness of the Lord.

In Christ's Love,

Mike Porter

³⁸ John 14:6

³⁹ Acts 4:12

⁴⁰ Luke 13:2-4

⁴¹ Hebrews 3:7-12

⁴² Joel 3:12-16