

# **What Do You Say In Times of Tragedy?**

**By Mark Mayberry  
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## **Introduction**

Life is filled with joy and heartache, blessing and calamity. What do you say in times of tragedy? What counsel can be offered in days of misfortune? The lips of the righteous bring forth what is acceptable (Prov. 10:32). Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances (Prov. 25:11). There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to be silent and a time to speak (Eccles. 3:1-10).

## **Some Suffering Is Our Own Fault**

Some suffering is our own fault. Many are the sorrows of the wicked (Psa. 32:10). Adversity pursues sinners, and the companion of fools will suffer harm (Prov. 13:20-21). Israel stood condemned for their apostasy; having sown to the wind, they reaped the whirlwind (Hos. 8:1-7).

## **Some Suffering Is The Fault Of Others**

Some suffering is the fault of others. The nation of Israel experienced long and terrible oppression in Egypt (Exod. 3:7-9). Evil and injustice are sad but common facts of life (Eccles. 4:1-3). Wicked men often abuse their power and position, depriving the needy of justice, robbing the poor of their rights (Isa. 10:1-4).

## **Some Suffering Is Circumstantial**

Some suffering is circumstantial. Swift and strength do not guarantee success, but time and chance overtake us all, thwarting our plans and purposes (Eccles. 9:11-12). Greater guilt is not the reason certain men suffer while others are spared (Luke 13:1-5). Personal calamity is not always (or often) a sign of divine disfavor (John 9:1-5).

## **Some Suffering Is From Satan**

Some suffering is from Satan. Sickness, suffering and death are ultimately traceable to Adam's transgression, a tragedy in which the serpent played a central role (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-7, 14-19, 24). As a test of Job's faith, Satan was allowed to personally afflict the faithful patriarch (Job 2:1-8). During Christ's earthly ministry, Satan was allowed greater impact in the affairs of men,

causing sickness and suffering (Luke 13:10-17). Paul's thorn in the flesh was a tormenting messenger of Satan, allowed by God, employed by God, but not caused by God (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

### **Some Suffering Is From God**

Some suffering is from God. Jehovah punishes the nations (Psa. 59:5). He brought Assyria and Babylon against His wayward people, and then afterward punished both superpowers for their sin (Isa. 10:12; Jer. 50:17-20). On a personal level, God brought both comfort and discomfort to Jonah the reluctant prophet (Jonah 4:1-11).

### **Conclusion**

Some suffering is our fault; some suffering is the fault of others; some suffering is circumstantial; some suffering is from Satan; some suffering is from God. However, we cannot always discern the difference. Job's friends were better help when they remained silent (Job 2:1-13). Remember, there is a time to be silent and a time to speak (Eccles. 3:7). Writing to Philemon regarding Onesimus, the inspired apostle was cautious regarding his assessment of providence, qualifying his statement with "perhaps" (Phile. 15-16). We should demonstrate similar restraint in offering counsel during times of calamity (Prov. 15:28). Evidencing caution, let us speak words of sober truth, offering encouragement and guidance reflecting the inspired message of truth (Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6; 1 Pet. 3:14-17).