

Sunday July 20th sermon: "When Christians Are Attacked – Why Do Tragedies Happen? (Pt 2)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS, by John Pittman Hey

2 Thessalonians 1:5-9; Matthew 21:33-46

According to God's Word, God works ALL THINGS after the council of His Will! God has a reason and purpose for every tragedy, but that doesn't mean that we know the why of it all at this time.

The Bible teaches that God not only made the weather system and processes, but that God controls them also. God carries out these things, rarely directly, but overwhelmingly by His providence. God is the ultimate cause of all things that exist or take place!

The Psalmist proclaims that the wind, the floods, the lightnings, the fire, the hail, they all fulfill God's word!

Because God works all things together for our good and His glory, we have confidence that, no matter how bad these things seem to us, God is in control, and He has a glorious purpose, and we are to trust in His goodness toward us, no matter what circumstances we have to face.

Even death brings the saints instantly into the presence of God and our Savior Jesus Christ! There the saints rejoice in glory, and await our clothing with our glorified bodies, to be received one day soon.

This month, our nation's support for Israeli Zionism has blown up in our face. Even those who are enthusiastic supporters of Zionist violence and terrorism, couldn't withstand the outrage over Israeli attacks on Christian Palestinians and American citizens.

Violent Zionist settlers have been burning fields and houses, assaulting and murdering Palestinians, blocking food aid vehicles from feeding starving

people in Gaza, and trying to drive them away, so that the Israelis can seize their homes and fields for themselves.

And so in the last month, settlers beat and murdered an American citizen visiting his family in Palestine, yet another church in Gaza was shelled, killing three people, and the historic Christian town of Taybeh, or Ephraim as it is called in the Gospel of John, has been under a sustained attack by settlers, burning homes and cars and fields, and destroying olive trees.

The Christian leaders of the town have issued a plea to the world for help against these settler attacks. While at first it looked like US Ambassador Mike Huckabee, who has supported the settler terrorism, would ignore the Christian plea for help, it quickly turned out that there are American citizens living in Taybeh who are under assault by the settlers.

So yesterday, Huckabee toured the town of Taybeh, and denounced the settler violence as "acts of terror."

All of this violence and oppression against believers is, of course, ordained by God for His Own purposes and for the good of His saints.

There are several reasons why God would bring this violence and persecution against His people whom He loves:

Perhaps God seeks to increase the faith of His people, to trust only in Him, and not in their own resilience and planning and strength. During persecution, we learn to trust in God for our help, and not in ourselves, and not in the vain help of other men.

Perhaps God is seeking to drive His people out of the land, before God's wrath rains down on Israel for its violence and persecution.

Perhaps God is using this persecution to bring to light the foolishness of His people in other lands, who stand and watch without protest as Christians are abused in Palestine.

Perhaps God is documenting the grave sins of our own country, that we pay for this evil to continue with our bombs and airplanes, even against Christian people.

We need to understand the basis of this evil against the Lord's people in this instance. It is only a manifestation of rebellion against God's judgment by the Israelites, because they murdered Messiah.

Jesus made this abundantly clear in the parable of the farmers and the landlord. Those farmers murdered their landlord's son, so that they might seize his inheritance for themselves.

Jesus was foretelling the fact that the rulers and people of Israel would murder Him in rebellion against His right and rule over them.

Jesus warned that the kingdom would be taken away from Israel, and given to another people who would render to God His due.

Sure enough, the rulers began plotting to murder Jesus, and soon thereafter, they did so.

Within a generation, Christ's prophecy was fulfilled. The Romans came and destroyed the nation and its capital Jerusalem, expelling its inhabitants.

Later on, Paul made it clear, in Galatians 3, that Christ is the true seed of Abraham, and Christ alone. He is the seed to whom the promises were given. Only by faith like Abraham had, faith in the promise of Christ, can anyone access the blessings God made to Abraham at the beginning.

Only those with Abraham's faith are his true children, and only those who are in Christ by faith inherit the promises made to the seed of Abraham, Who is Christ.

Only by such faith in Jesus, can Jews, Gentiles, Arabs, and whomever we may be, gain the promises of blessing to Abraham. Only such persons are the true children of Abraham for the promise and unto salvation.

Those who are in Christ are Abraham's seed, and heirs of the promise.

There is no inheritance outside of the Lord Jesus! There is no land or blessing or salvation except in Messiah!

How can lost Jews regain their inheritance? By being reconciled to Christ! All those ancient promises of good things are found only in our Savior.

Once you understand these things, the true horror of what the settlers are doing to believers becomes most obvious.

They lost that land because they murdered the Son, and to this day, they hate God and they hate Christ.

But they say, we will reverse God's judgment against us for killing His Son, and we will seize back what was taken from us by God in judgment. We will sustain our rebellion against God, AND we will show the world that we utterly condemn God's judgment against us, by seizing what God took from us while still rebelling against Him.

Thus they are trying to take back Christ's inheritance for themselves, without submitting to their king, just like they did at the very beginning, when they murdered Him.

But that they should also attack the Lord's people, those who gather to worship Jesus, and seek to take from them what the Lord has given to them, is a terrifyingly evil thing.

Remember what Christ accused Saul of: why are you persecuting ME!

Those settlers are proclaiming, that they will seize back Christ's inheritance, which was taken from them in God's judgment.

This explains a final reason for these attacks against the Lord's people in Taybeh: it is so that these violent men, and their violent government that supports them, might fall under the particular wrath and judgment which God has proclaimed against all who persecute His people.

Paul explained why the Lord's people are persecuted – so that the wicked might one day be destroyed in perfect justice and righteousness. Paul urged the Thessalonians to rest in hope, until the Lord returns in flaming fire, taking vengeance against all those who persecuted them, and bringing them to everlasting destruction.

Rather than Christians in America talking up the blessings of Abraham upon the lost Jews, we should be warning of the curses that God promised to all those who curse Abraham and his seed, the Lord Jesus.

We must cry out for repentance and reconciliation to the Lord Jesus for all those persecutors of the saints, so that they might return to the blessings in Christ that they are seeking to seize by violence in rebellion against Christ.

The astounding thing is, that because they cursed the seed of Abraham when they put Christ to death, the blessings of Abraham fell upon us in Christ!

Our salvation and blessing were brought about by their rebellion against Christ, the seed of Abraham. They acted out of hatred and greed to offer Him up as a sacrifice for the sin of His people who trust in Him unto salvation.

As for all sinners, their restoration to the blessings of Abraham can only be found in faith and submission to the Lord Jesus. There can be no lasting blessing at all for anybody outside of Christ.