

Calamity

The market place is empty,
No traffic in the streets.
All the builder's tools are silent,
No more time to harvest wheat.
Busy housewives cease their labors,
In the courtroom no debate,
Work on earth is all suspended,
As the King comes thru the gate.

The King is Coming / Bill Gaither

As a counselor over the years I have found that many Christians find it very difficult to see God as the “cause” of the painful realities of personal or national conflict, chaos, and what the scriptures refer to as ‘calamity’ and in some cases ‘pestilence.’

Webster defines calamity as: *a disastrous event marked by great loss, lasting distress, and suffering*. The Webster definition of pestilence is: *a contagious or infectious epidemic disease that is virulent and devastating*. Covid-19, the current world-wide pandemic, certainly qualifies as an example of both calamity and pestilence.

Christians, and many church leaders, find it acceptable to bring God into this time of difficulty with expressions like: “Well, we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, so God will find ways to use this in the lives of his people.” Well, of course he will. Yet, when our personal feelings about events like our present disaster drive us to those conclusions we seem to be limiting God to a “responder” instead of the “initiator” — the caring, creative Father.

This then begs a more realistic consideration. Have we seriously considered that God, without question, has *purposely caused* this calamity that the world is going through right now? I have selected one verse out of the Old Testament to shed light on events God causes — things we too easily tend to label his “permissive will.” To amplify the full meaning of the single verse below, I am using six different translations of the Bible to help to make the point more absolute.

The verse is Isaiah 45:7 KJV —

I form the light, and create darkness:

I make peace, and create evil:

I the Lord do all these things. KJV

The unsettling center line above also seems to have troubled modern translators.

Causing peace and creating disaster. AMP

Causing well-being and creating calamity. NASB

I bring prosperity and create disaster. NIV

I send good times and bad times. NLT

I make well and create woe. RSV

Yet the last line in each version is consistent through all translations:

I the Lord do all these things.

In this single verse, we find God creates, causes, brings, sends, and does all of the various words our translators have used to help us understand that God does much more than just sit on his throne waiting for the next problem to come his way. We can conclude that God allows, and causes, calamity and disaster in his process of drawing his people closer to himself, teaching us his ways, and using all of creation to bring us to the mature trust that he values in his children.

A quick clarification of the King James Version's use of the word "evil." The Isaiah passage is one of two where we see the word evil tied to "what God does." The other passage we find in Amos 3:6...**Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?** Clearly, newer translations prefer to use other words that they felt might better express the type of evil they believed God was referring to in both passages. Yet, the same word — "rah" — is used over 600 times in the Bible with various translated meanings like wicked, adversity, affliction, calamity, grievous, misery, disaster, and trouble. A good example would be Exodus 4:11 where the Lord himself said... **Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?**

In the Isaiah passage the Lord seems to want it to be clear that we must look to him as the one who indeed brings us disasters and calamity. It would be a very easy step for us to refer to our present pandemic as evil, disastrous, and a calamity for all the world. But how many would take it to the next level and see that God has "done it" for us.

It seems reasonable that the closer we come to Christ's return for his church, the more we will experience the trials and tribulations that we are clearly warned about by the prophets of old and referred to in a variety of ways by the New Testament writers as well as those God has given a platform and voice in our own time.

Students of Bible prophecy are not surprised by events that have been triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic. That's because the Lord Jesus Christ gave us signs that would precede his second coming, and one of those many signs that we are seeing today is "pestilence." — Mike Gendron, ministry leader¹

What if everything this world revolves around has been put on pause? What if everything that distracts us has been set aside for a specific purpose? What if, in the midst of this horrendous epoch in human history, the author of time is granting humanity a 'time out'? What if for one brief time in human history, humanity is being given 'extra time'? And, if so, why? What if it is to enable us to consider why we are here, to be given time (and the absence of busyness) to genuinely consider the most important matters in the entire universe? Time to ponder good and evil, if mankind can have peace, where do we go when we die, and why? Is there really any hope? — Deborah Homeister, homemaker¹

The unusual cessation of human activities in the world's busiest cities cannot be explained by the facts surrounding the current global pandemic. We have had far more serious pandemics happen without the world ceasing its activities. The two percent death rate for coronavirus is a drop in the bucket compared with the fatality rate of SARS (10%) and MERS (34%). The global shutdown strikes me as a divine warning... God is the master of perfect

timing. Nothing happens by coincidence. — Carol Swain, professor Vanderbilt and Princeton¹

There are times, says Jesus, when God cannot lift the darkness from you, but trust Him. God will appear like an unkind friend, but He is not; He will appear like an unnatural Father, but He is not; He will appear like an unjust judge, but He is not. Keep the notion of the mind of God behind all things. Nothing happens in any particular unless God's will is behind it. You can rest in perfect confidence in Him. — Oswald Chambers 7/16²

I think you would agree that it has become very easy for Christians in general to pass Covid-19 off as “something God has just allowed” — the result of a mistake, a terrible plan by another country, a lab accident, or whatever sounds reasonable. Are we willing to accept the prospect that God is the cause behind the effect, and deaths and disaster are a vital part of God's road to his ultimate intention for his people — at this time, for his purpose?

Are we willing to thank the Lord for whatever he deems necessary to draw the lost to himself, to send a warning blast to every nation, and to press his people toward a maturity that sees all of the trials and tribulations of life directly from his hand, for his ultimate intention?

I have a framed statement hanging on our wall. *“Faith is coming to the end of everything you have and taking one more step!”*

“Fussing always ends in sin. Fretting springs from a determination to get our own way. Fretting is wicked if you are a child of God.” — Oswald Chambers 7/4²

¹ Taken from articles in Lamplighter Magazine, Lamb & Lion Ministries

² My Utmost For His Highest