

## Responding To Catastrophe

**Reacting Constructively Under Trying Circumstances**

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Hope you are all doing well. I know that this has been a rather tough week for some, hearing all the bad news, but if you think about it, it was only four years ago that we were doing the same thing after 9-11. It is about the same time of year, and things were very bad then as well. We were wondering what was happening to our nation, and what would befall it in the fallout of the terrorist strike. Now, we are wondering what is going to befall it in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Many of you are aware how vital that area (Southeastern Louisiana, and Southwestern Mississippi) is to our nation's economy, being as it is the mouth of the Mississippi. All river traffic in the central U.S. goes through the Mississippi and out through the port of Southern Louisiana, which is the largest port in the United States. I do not know if you were aware of that or not, but the Port of Southern Louisiana stretches from the mouth of the Mississippi River upstream quite a ways. It is the fifth largest port in the world. It is bigger than New York, Los Angeles at Long Beach, Seattle, Portland, or any other West Coast Port including San Francisco. It is larger than Charleston, Norfolk, or Philadelphia. You may think of them as great shipping centers, but the Port of Southern Louisiana is actually the largest in the United States, and fifth in the world.

It is also central to our petroleum industry, at least the transshipment of petroleum is centered there, and the LOOP is where the big tankers come in and offload crude oil. From there it is transported to the refineries. The LOOP seems to be OK. It has suffered some damage, but it is repairable. But, had things been worse, it could have gotten really bad for the entire nation. It is still going to be bad, because the shipment of goods is going to be curtailed—not stopped—just curtailed quite a bit.

Evidently the Mississippi river will need to be dredged a bit so that ships and barges can begin to move up and down again.

But the real problem that we are going to be facing as a Nation is that the people are gone. You can have all the technically advanced equipment you want in one place, but if the people are not there to run them—the skilled labor that has been trained on these things are not there to man them—then nothing can happen.

Where are the people?

The city of New Orleans has about a half million people. There are about an equal amount in the surrounding areas, and they are gone. They have fled north, east and west.

The extent and duration of this tragedy is such that some of them will choose to leave New Orleans behind and start again somewhere else. They will put their kids into school in some other community, find a job there where their skills are needed, and they will never come back.

How long will it take for the region around New Orleans—that region up and down the Mississippi from Natchez southward—to recover? Not just infrastructure-wise, but people-wise. Nothing can happen without the people.

And so in that sense, the tragedy of all of this may linger for a long time.

Obviously, of course, this has been the news of the week. The whole thing about Hurricane Katrina, and as just mentioned, it may be the news of the month, but maybe even the year; and we may be feeling the repercussions of this for years.

I am sure that you have all seen the pictures on the news of people being rescued from rooftops; boats and ships stranded above the high-water line. I saw what I think was said to be a US Army Vessel. It looked like a small transport, and it was totally up out of the water. It was just tons of steel. The hurricane just picked it up, and set it on land. It is amazing to see it.

Of course, we have seen the water feet deep in downtown New Orleans. We have seen the homes and the businesses demolished. Nothing is standing.

And we have also seen the complaining, and the looting, and the agitated shouting, and the chanting for aid, and the buses, and helicopters coming in to transport thousands to far off shelters.

While disturbances have occurred elsewhere along Katrina's path, which was 75 miles wide, or a bit more, the response of New Orleans residents has been, to put it nicely, particularly far from patient, understanding, or noble. As a matter of fact, I felt ashamed that this news was going out around the world, and causing people to think, "There goes those ugly Americans again. If they do not have something right away, then they just complain, get their guns, shoot, and act like the Wild West."

Instead of realizing (these people of New Orleans) the complex logistics of organizing, and transporting millions of tons of aid into a stricken area like this, covering thousands of square miles, they demanded immediate handouts. Look at what the welfare mentality has done to those people. You can blame them in a small way. I think that the blame goes much further than that. It is our whole society which has been built on handouts, not doing for one's self, of not working for a living. When it did not come instantly, many of them armed themselves, and looted, shot at rescue helicopters, and aid workers, and hospital convoys.

I do not know if you are aware of it, but the police had to go through New Orleans after the looters, and empty the gun shops of ammunition so that it would not hit the streets. People were taking the guns, but leaving the ammo behind (thankfully!) so that the police went in behind them and made sure that it was taken off the streets so that there might not be a war down there.

It was said that there were gangs operating, patrolling the streets down there overnight, and basically turning it into a war zone.

Now, just east along the Gulf Coast and a bit inland from there, people have been trickling back to their homes and business, and have begun to clean up, and assess the damage. I am sure that they are upset. They are devastated, as we heard that Dee was distraught over what has happened, and our hearts go out to them, and most of us have prayed for them, and have done what we could.

But even though many of them seem to have begun to take positive steps to rebuilding their lives, and recovering their properties and livelihoods. They are starting to get back to work. They are starting to do what they can to make the best of their situation. They are starting to return order to the chaos that has been in this disaster's wake.

Now, it is my own opinion that this country and most of the people who are in it have search and rescue, restoring order, and distributing food, water, and medical aid down to a near science. We do it pretty well. We are prepared as best as we can to respond to something like this.

Who do other nations of the world call upon when a disaster strikes? It is us, is it not? We have done it so often, and not just for ourselves, but all around the world.

And so we have that bit of expertise. We seem to have a knack for it. We are Johnny-on-the-spot, as it were. National Guard units are arriving on the scene in New Orleans, and elsewhere, by the thousands each day. They got there as quickly as they could. But, many or most of them had to be called up from their civilian duties.

It takes time, but they did it quickly. Long convoys of haulers and airlift cargo planes are getting the food and aid in there. But, they are hampered by the roads, and the devastation. You can only do so much.

Volunteer doctors, nurses and aid workers are pouring into the affected counties and working long hours under terrible conditions to give what help they can. Workers and trucks from utility companies—I know that here in Charlotte, North Carolina, they were organized and ready to go toward the Gulf on Tuesday! Some of them were held back just a bit, about 12 hours; just to make sure there were not problems cropping up here in North Carolina from the storm's remnants. And as soon as they determined that it seemed to be going straight up the river toward the Ohio Valley, they got in their trucks and they went.

Maybe you heard about the problems here in the Southeast with the two pipelines—the Colonial Pipeline and the Plantation Pipeline. These run from the Gulf region up through Atlanta, then through Charlotte, and then up into

Virginia. The word went out that these pipelines were going to be shut down, and so there were runs on the gasoline stations here and prices went up terribly. They were at about \$2.50 per gallon on Monday, but by yesterday (Friday), they were at about \$3.39 per gallon.

But, those pipelines are back working again and almost at full capacity. How long has it been? This is the Sabbath (Saturday). It happened Monday—what, maybe five days? That is pretty quick work. That is good work.

These people need to be applauded for their speedy and efficient work—not criticized.

I really feel for George Bush because he is getting pounded for something that he has no ability whatsoever to control. He is a man! He may be the president of the strongest country in the world, but he cannot stop a hurricane. And, he is one man. He cannot prepare by himself to help everybody—the millions of people—who have suffered from such a hurricane.

I almost got the impression from the Mayor of New Orleans that he expected FEMA or Mr. Bush personally to beam down supplies into the Super Dome on Monday afternoon!

Maybe I am exaggerating (only a teeny bit), but that is the way that he sounded to me Wednesday night when he called into a local radio station and lambasted President Bush and the Federal Government using a profanity laden diatribe against their slowness.

To me, it just revealed his lack of wisdom and understanding, and his total lack of character. Like it or not, Rudi Giuliani did what he could. But this man in New Orleans has done nothing but complain. It is sad to see. I am sorry that it has happened this way. I am getting to something here. This has been a long introduction, but I am getting to something, which is that there are lessons to be learned from this terrible situation, especially from the various responses that people have made to it.

Like I said, we sympathize with these people very much, but it is hard to sympathize with people who do nothing but throw it back into your face, because you are not doing enough for them. It is very sad to see.

Now, enough about them.

Most of us live in areas that could be affected by similar types of disasters. Here in the southeast, we are prone to earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and so on. We could go on and broaden this out to encompass the whole United States, and Canada; just about anywhere in the world. You can also worry about volcanoes, and droughts, nuclear accidents; and let us not forget terrorist strikes.

Terrible things can happen at just about anytime.

With an earthquake, the people along the west coast know this, especially those who live in Southern California; you do not get a warning like they got with Hurricane Katrina. An earthquake just happens! The only warning you might get is a dog barking, or some agitated chickens in the backyard.

It happens. And it destroys. And, before you know it, you could be in the midst of a catastrophe even worse than what we have seen with Katrina.

The question is: How are we going to react if and when the next disaster strikes our area?

Are we going to gripe and complain? Are we going to sit there and wait for somebody to help us? Or are we going to maybe have a more positive response? What are we going to do?

Now the Bible contains our rule of life. It is what we live by. And in it, we find the reactions of men and women to tragedy and disaster. And, we can look at these things and learn from their examples what is good, and what is not so good; what is positive, and negative; what is helpful, and what is going to be ultimately further destructive.

So, I want to look at several of these today.

I have divided them into three negative and three positive responses. And, I am going to be taking the most time on the negative ones because I think that we can learn the most from them about what not to do. But, we will be looking at some of these positive ones also to give us some idea of what should be at the top of our list of reactions.

One more thing before we get into this.

I have taken them all from one book of the Bible: Genesis. It is interesting that they are all there just laid out like you would not believe. They are almost in order too!

We will start at the beginning. It is always good to begin at the beginning. We will read Genesis 3, verses 6 through 13. I also want to explain something before we get going.

Some of these disasters are natural. For instance, we will get to one—Noah and the Flood—and his reactions and responses. But, most of them are catastrophes that we bring upon ourselves because of our sins.

Now, some of these you might not consider catastrophes at first glance, but they are indeed catastrophes. Some of them are among the most catastrophic that this world has ever seen.

And this first one is probably the worst one—Adam and Eve's sin. That started the ball rolling for all of the rest of us. And it will only end in huge destruction. This is the first catastrophe that humankind faced.

**Genesis 3:6** So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate...

There it was! There is the catastrophe! This, along with:

**Genesis 3:6** ...She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

They were both in it, and they both committed this dastardly deed.

**Genesis 3:7-13** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where *are* you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden [maybe God was humming?], and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." And the LORD God said to the woman, "What *is* this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Alright! As I said, Adam and Eve were responsible for, perhaps, the worst catastrophe ever to befall humankind—the introduction of sin.

Now, this was not a natural disaster in the sense that the Garden of Eden became devastated and destroyed. No, it was a spiritual disaster. And the consequences of it are still being felt today. We still sin do we not? We are still following in the path of our first parents, Adam and Eve. This is a catastrophe that drastically changed man's relationship with God. It was a catastrophe in which mankind was ultimately separated from his Creator, and all the good things that the relationship with God could bring.

Now notice verse 7 where it says that their eyes were opened. What this means in plain language is that both of them were immediately aware that something had changed. They both knew that things were not going to be the same from this point onward.

It was like flipping a light switch. They may not have known what to call it, but in that instant their innocence left them forever. They looked down and saw that they were naked. Something had changed in their minds to give them a different perspective on themselves, their condition, their environment, and their actions.

And they hid themselves from God. They felt stress. They felt tension. They had the sure knowledge that they had done something wrong. They felt guilt. And so, they tried to cover themselves.

Here, it is a double entendre. They sewed fig leaves together and tried to cover themselves. They were actually trying to cover their guilt by putting on clothing. What good did that do?

And then, they tried to hide from the very One who could save them—their Benefactor.

Of course, they could not hide from God, and so He demanded an explanation. Any good parent would do that. "What is going on here? What have you done? Why are you behaving like this?"

And instead of confessing their disobedience, and throwing themselves on the mercy of God, (I am sure that He would have been quick to forgive, with consequences, but quick to forgive) they pointed fingers—Adam at Eve, and Eve at the Serpent. It was just like a big lineup. "He did it! Do not look at me!"

And they were technically correct! Eve had given the fruit to Adam. And the Serpent had deceived Eve. But, their blame game did not account for their own culpability in their sins. Just because somebody else made you do it, does not mean that you are innocent. You still did it. The blame game does not work with God.

If we would go on, we find out that He brushed all of that aside and cursed all three of them. Each one was responsible for a part of that sin. And they had to pay for it.

There has been a lot of this blame game in the Hurricane Katrina disaster. As I have said, I feel sorry for President Bush. I think that he has gotten way more blame than he deserves.

No man can control the weather! I do not know if you have heard this, but Robert Kennedy's son, Robert Kennedy, Jr. was blaming President Bush for

his failure to sign the Kyoto Protocol for this hurricane disaster. It is very stupid. I do not know if you are aware of it, but if we did everything that we could as far as that Kyoto Protocol (the global warming thing that so many of the other nations seemed to have signed) tells us to do, we would lower the temperature by only four-tenths of one degree Celsius. That is a bit more than four-tenths of one degree Fahrenheit, but even so, that is not enough to do anything!

Mr. Bush has been correctly advised that it would be stupid to sign that agreement. The only reason might be for political reasons, as a bargaining chip in some negotiation. That is basically what he was doing while in Scotland during the G7 or G8 meetings in July at the time of the London bombings. He said that we would do what we could without actually signing the thing.

But, global warming had nothing to do with this hurricane. And, certainly our troops in Iraq had nothing to do with this hurricane. You know, he is being blamed for that by this Cindy Sheehan woman. She said it was his policy of killing (in Iraq and Afghanistan) that caused this hurricane, along with his intransigence on the subject of global warming. Oh so stupid! Stupid! Blaming one another for something that no one man, or a group of men, could control.

Now people blame others to divert attention from their own faults. When we blame others it gives us a brief feeling of relief from our own guilt. But, it merely ends up obscuring the real issues and postpones the inevitable consequences of our sins.

We all know what Numbers 32:23 says.

**Numbers 32:23** ...and be sure your sin will find you out.

It is an easy one to remember. Numbers 3-2, 2-3. "...be sure, your sin will find you out."

And the New Testament actually repeats this at least 5 times, I think. It does not use those exact words, but it basically says something along the lines of, "What you say in the inner rooms will be shouted from the housetops." That

thing is repeated in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and then also in a couple of other places.

Your sin will find you out. Blaming another person is not going to absolve you of any kind of guilt in such a matter.

So, this first one I called the "Blame Game." That is a negative response to disaster. Do not point the finger! It is not nice. It is not good.

Let us go to Leviticus 26, and we will see something that God says about this. If you will remember your chapters, Leviticus 26 is the Blessings and Cursings Chapter. And this comes up at the end of the chapter beginning about verse 40, through about verse 45.

Instead of blaming somebody else, this is what God suggests:

**Leviticus 26:40-45** *But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land. The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; they will accept their guilt, because they despised My judgments and because their soul abhorred My statutes. Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I *am* the LORD their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I *am* the LORD."*

So, God's suggestion in times of distress and catastrophe, and disaster is to confess our guilt. Not to point the finger of blame at somebody else, and accuse them of being the cause of this, that, or the other thing; but to confess that we have had a part in it. And then, God will remember us.

He may not provide the way out immediately. If you would notice, as we went through here it seems to say that there will be a lag between our confession and His restoration of us, but if we do confess that we had a part to play in it, He will be certain to remember, and restore us in His time.

I would also like to read I John 1:9 where the Apostle echoes something along these same lines much more succinctly, and in a more spiritual manner. He says in I John 1:9:

**I John 1:9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We have that promise! Instead of pointing fingers of accusation in a time of calamity it is better to confess one's transgressions to God.

People these days laugh and scoff at the idea that our sins could bring upon us such calamity. But, the Bible is full of examples of this happening.

Just take one example of Israel. Because they broke the Sabbath and committed idolatry, He sent them away out of the land! He sent the Assyrians into the land, and sent the remainder of the Israelites, after many were killed, into exile.

National calamity is a result of national sin. And national sin is the result of many, many individuals' sin. It all builds up and God is on His Throne. And He is watching! And especially to Israel, He is ready to chasten them to bring them back!

But, it is not in vogue these days to think that God is watching us so closely, and is so involved in our lives, both individually, and nationally. But, He is.

God is sovereign, and He is watching Israel very closely. He is watching the church of God especially. If anyone is going to be living under this principle, it is certainly going to be the church of God, because He acts first among His people.

So, if we sin, we can be sure that our sin will find us out, and God will use that punishment to bring us back to Him. The best reaction, once we find ourselves in a disaster is to confess our sins. Do not point the finger of blame. When they occur, the best thing to do is to admit our part in them.

Now, back to Genesis. This time turn to chapter 4 for our second negative example. This is the story of Cain. This one I have titled, "It is not fair!" That is basically what Cain said.

**Genesis 4:8-9** Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where *is* Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. *Am* I my brother's keeper?"

It seems to be a real snotty attitude.

**Genesis 4:10-13** And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth." And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment *is* greater than I can bear!

Poor guy! Do you not feel for him? Does not your heart just go out for him—this murderer?

**Genesis 4:14** Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen *that* anyone who finds me will kill me."

Boo hoo hoo hooo!

**Genesis 4:15** And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

Now Cain brought the next catastrophe on himself, just as Adam and Eve did to themselves. Cain was the first murderer. He killed his own brother! Some even think that Cain and Abel were twins by the way that it is worded regarding their birth.

Can you imagine that? The first two people born on the face of the earth end up one dead murdered by the other. Now, as with his parents, God accosted Cain about it immediately.

But, Cain tried to avoid admitting guilt first by lying, "I do not know where he is," and then, secondly, by denying any responsibility whatsoever for his brother's well being, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

So, God did what God always does, He cursed him with the consequences of his sin. And Cain said that "That is not fair!"

Do you know how idiotic that statement was? Do you realize that God had actually given him mercy? He should have been a grease spot! He should have been killed immediately! That is the penalty for murder—death, execution, capital punishment! Read the Bible!

But, God let him live! And Cain had the audacity to tell God, "Your mercy is not good enough!" (And God let him live anyway!) Which reminds me of Hurricane Katrina, and what was happening down there in New Orleans in many cases. The aid that they were getting was not good enough!

Was it the Governor of Louisiana who said that President Bush and the military should have been dropping aid in there like they did in Berlin after the second World War? How idiotic! The place was under water! Where are you going to drop this stuff? Who is going to distribute the stuff?

But Cain whined and complained about injustice—Injustice!—from God to His Face. "You are not fair! It is not right that I should be cursed like this!" Cain was truly a despicable man. It really comes out just how horrible a person he was.

This just shows you how far God is willing to go. He showed him mercy, again! First He showed him mercy by not killing him immediately. Secondly, He showed him mercy by putting a mark on him, saying that if anyone killed Cain, he should receive vengeance seven-fold.

Now, I do not know if there was an actual mark put on him—a scar or something. Some people think that a boundary was placed where he was allowed to wander and be a fugitive, but if Cain would stay within that area, then he was safe. I do not know.

The straight, literal reading seems to say there was a mark of some kind so that people would recognize who he was, and not try to kill him. Nevertheless, God showed him mercy a second time.

Now, God had other things that He was thinking about for the development of humankind. He apparently wanted someone like Cain as an example, because He allowed Cain not only to live, but to have children.

And the "Way of Cain" developed over the centuries until the Flood. Then, it was brought through the Flood by Noah and his family, and the wives of the sons. And, it started again on the other side.

But, God had a bigger picture of what He was allowing here, but nevertheless, Cain's response to this was awful.

Turn to Lamentations 3:37-42. Remember what has just happened here. This is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem. Evidently, this is some of Jeremiah's thoughts after Jerusalem fell, or during the crisis while Jerusalem was under siege.

**Lamentations 3:37-38** *Who is he who speaks and it comes to pass, When the Lord has not commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That woe and well-being proceed?*

This is just a very simple statement of God's sovereignty. He is in control of everything, and if it happens, then we can be pretty sure that either God spoke it to cause it to come to pass, or He allowed it, whether good or bad.

**Lamentations 3:39** Why should a living man complain, A man for the punishment of his sins?

"You are alive, are you not? Why complain? You are not dead! You are just reaping what you have sown." Further advice in verse 40:

**Lamentations 3:40-42** Let us search out and examine our ways,  
And turn back to the LORD; Let us lift our hearts and hands To  
God in heaven.

We have transgressed and rebelled; You have not pardoned.

And we know that He has not pardoned by the destruction that we see. So, the advice, here, is that "These things have happened, and you lived through them. Repent! Do not complain! Turn to God. Change your ways!" That is a more positive approach to disaster.

There are similar passages in the New Testament. We often go through these during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

**I Corinthians 10:10** ...nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

Now, that tells you what murmuring gets you! Further grief! This is what we have got to have in mind.

**I Corinthians 10:11-13** Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation [tragedy, disaster] has overtaken you except such as is common to man [others have suffered these too]; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted [put under trial] beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

This is a much more constructive way of looking at it! "God spared me, I am still alive, I can still come through this well if I turn to Him and seek the way of escape that He has provided."

There is also Philippians 2:14-15 where Paul tells the Philippians:

**Philippians 2:14-15** Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...

So even though terrible things befall us, Paul's advice is, "Do not complain! Do not argue!" He said that we are there as examples of His way of life. And we should rise to the occasion, as he says here, "...in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" to show the right way. We have to be the godly examples in times of turmoil.

Now, the third negative one. This is kind of interesting. It is a bit out of order in that it is in Genesis 19. If you will remember your chapters, this is the destruction of Sodom chapter. The destruction has already taken place in Genesis 19:30. I have called this third negative response, "Insult to Injury."

**Genesis 19:30-33** Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.

Now the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father *is* old, and *there is* no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth. "Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father." So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

He must have been smashingly drunk!

**Genesis 19:34-38** It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, "Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in *and* lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father." Then they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose. Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he *is* the father of the Moabites [from father] to this day. And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi [son of my people] ; he *is* the father of the people of Ammon to this day.

So, this is the origin of the Moabites, and the Ammonites. And, just in case you are wondering, this sin is still having its effects. The Moabites and Ammonites are part of those people who are fighting Israel, and the United States, and just about everybody else over there in the Middle East.

We are pretty sure that the Ammonites are in Jordan, and the Moabites may also be in Jordan, but there is some speculation that they are also a part of the population of Iraq.

It is very interesting that this sin is still having its effects even today.

Let us think about this situation... Lot and his daughters had just come through the most horrific experience of their life. They had just lost "Mrs. Lot" who had become a pillar of salt. They had argued with the angel when

he said, "You flee here...", and they were dragging their heels; and finally they said, "Well, let us go to Zoar." And the angel said, "Ok. Zoar is fine. Get!"

And so, they went to Zoar which was (if you would like to think of it this way) their place of safety. But what does it say here? Lot was afraid to dwell in Zoar. God provided him with a place of safety, and he was afraid to stay there.

So, he took his daughters and left, and went into a cave in the mountains. They went from a place where they could possibly have had help—other people, supplies, and things around them to put them back on their feet. But no. They fled into the mountains and went to live in a cave, away from everybody, and the daughters think that the world is coming to an end, and there is not going to be anyone for them to marry and have children by.

And so, they added sin to their misery.

That is why I called this, "Adding Insult to Injury." They did nothing to make the situation better. They did everything they could (it seems) to make it worse! They piled foolishness on top of their disaster—sin on top of their calamity. They succumbed to irrational fear, and they presumed that God would not provide. And they sinned. And they sinned big. And they cursed millions of people with the terrible hostility that has existed between their descendants and the people of Israel.

Of course, God allowed all of this to happen. But, they really needed to get a grip on things. They needed to calm down. They needed to stop making assumptions. They needed to sit down and not do anything rash. They needed to think things through. They needed to remember what God had told them through the angel. They needed to remember the things that they learned from Abraham. They would have been far better off finding and staying with Abraham instead of fleeing into the mountains. He is the one who came to their aid at every other time before this. He was the one who was close to God. They knew that this was a destruction from God. The safest place would be near Abraham.

But, they struck off on their own. And, they compounded their troubles with sin.

In Amos 4 is an example of what God did to Israel to get them to wake up to their sins. But, if you will read between the lines, here, He sends disaster, and they sin all the more. So He has to send another disaster, and they sin more. And He has to send another disaster, and it goes on, and on. They never stop sinning which is the cause of their problems.

**Amos 4:6-10** Also I gave you cleanness of teeth [famine] in all your cities. And lack of bread in all your places; Yet you have not returned to Me," Says the LORD. I also withheld rain from you, When *there were* still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, And where it did not rain the part withered. So two *or* three cities wandered to another city to drink water, But they were not satisfied; Yet you have not returned to Me," Says the LORD. I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, Your vineyards, Your fig trees, And your olive trees, The locust devoured *them*; Yet you have not returned to Me," Says the LORD. I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt; Your young men I killed with a sword, Along with your captive horses; I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils; Yet you have not returned to Me," Says the LORD.

Do you see how these things are escalating? One on top of the other. And, in between, God gives a period for them to repent, and they do not. And so, He has to do something else.

**Amos 4:11-12** I overthrew *some* of you, As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning; Yet you have not returned to Me," Says the LORD. Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; Because I will do this to you, Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

He is telling them that the only thing left is death!

You might want to also jot down Hosea 13:15, and read all the way to the end of the book. This is the prophecy of Israel at the time of the end. And God says that He is going to bring them low, and through disaster after disaster, they are going to finally repent.

I do want to read Hosea 14:9:

**Hosea 14:9** *Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right; The righteous walk in them, But transgressors stumble in them.*

So, He is saying, "This is My advice. You know what I have commanded. You know my way. Do those things, and you will be fine. If you do not do them, you are just going to suffer further grief."

Do not add insult to injury by continuing to commit sin after God has punished.

I would like to now go through three positive examples.

This is Noah. I have called this one, "First things first. Get Your Priorities Straight."

**Genesis 8:14** And in the seventh month on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of the month, the earth was dried.

So, now we know where we are. We are at the end of the flood.

**Genesis 8:15-21** Then God spoke to Noah, saying, Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that *is* with you: birds and cattle and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, *and* whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark. [That was the first thing that he did.

He followed God's instruction, and left the ark.] Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

Now. Can you imagine, do you realize what Noah did?

Remember, God told Noah to take seven of every clean animal. Those animals were what Noah had to eat if he wanted meat.

But, he had his priorities straight. He sacrificed one-seventh of his entire stockpile of clean meat to God. One of each clean animal, and one of each clean bird. Do you understand what he did?

The earth was destroyed. We do not know exactly what the condition of the earth was when they opened that ark. But, there could not have been much left. It was ready to start producing again, I am sure. But, they were still in a fairly precarious position. All that they had and could use was in that ark. There were not fields of grain waiting to be reaped when they opened that door.

All they had was what they had brought with them, and had not used yet during the duration of the flood. Was it not about a whole year before they actually got out?

But Noah said, "I am going to acknowledge the Provider of all things with an offering. I, and my house, may have faced the worst crisis that anybody has ever faced, but I am going to put God first, and give Him one of everything that we have left."

And God was pleased.

Noah put God first, ahead of his own good; ahead of his family's good; he gave God an offering—a burnt offering that was totally consumed. The only One who got the benefit of that offering was God. And He does not need to eat. But those 8 souls which came off the ark did need to eat.

But, Noah sacrificed to God. Noah put God first. This is humanly counterintuitive. Our drive of self-preservation screams at us, "Do not do this! Do not kill that lamb! We need it! It is going to feed the family!" But, it was the right thing to do to thank God for bringing them through the flood, and to acknowledge His Sovereignty, and His Providence.

Noah understood what is here in Proverbs 3:9-12. He understood this whether it was in these exact words or not. He was a righteous man.

**Proverbs 3:9-12** Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine. My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son *in whom* he delights.

The earth had gotten, and mankind had been given, the greatest discipline that it had ever been given, and Noah knew that it was for good. And so, he honored God with his possessions.

And God did exactly what it says here.

You and I are here, are we not? He brought Noah and his family through, and gave them prosperity so they could multiply and fill the earth once again. Because, Noah put God first.

Alright, the second positive example. This one I call, "Get on the Offensive!" This is part of the story of Abraham. The background of this is the Confederation of Kings which make war against Sodom and Gomorrah, where Lot lived.

**Genesis 14:13** Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they *were* allies with Abram.

What he had told him was that Lot had been taken by these kings.

**Genesis 14:14-17** Now when Abram heard that his brother [actually nephew] was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained *servants* who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which *is* north of Damascus. So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that *is*, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who *were* with him.

And if we would go on we would find that Abraham also put God first and gave a tithe of all that he had there to Melchizedek, and then he gave everything else back to the owners. He did not keep anything for himself.

Here was another catastrophe. Lot, his nephew, was taken captive by an enemy army, and was being hustled off to their homeland. Abraham could have just sat there and said, "Woe is me! Woe is me! What am I going to do?"

But there is no hesitation. Abraham got his people together and they were off. He took action. He did something constructive. He did not just sit there and pile dirt on his head. He did something. He made the best of the situation. He tried to help.

I think that the worst thing one could do is nothing!

Remember the lesson of the parable of the talents? The one who did nothing with his talent was the one who was cast into outer darkness. He just sat there on what he had been given, and did not try to make things any better.

Now, if you want to jot down Philippians 3:12-14, this is where it says that we press on, and strive, not as though we have attained already because we have not, but we have moved forward, and pressed toward the goal; we keep acting and working. We keep doing what we need to do. Do not allow yourself to sit there and do nothing, and become stagnant.

We, like Abraham in this example, can in wisdom go on the offensive, and restore peace and tranquility to our lives, and others who have been affected by the disaster. Take action in wisdom, of course, but take action. Do not just do nothing and sit there.

The third positive example. I call it, "Get to Work!" This is very similar to the second one. But, it is a bit different. This is the example of Joseph. In Genesis 39, Joseph was a slave in Egypt.

**Genesis 39:1-6** Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD *was* with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all *that* he had he put under his authority. So it was, from the time *that* he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field. Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

Plus an extra detail there. Go down to verse 21 which is after Joseph had been put into prison:

**Genesis 39:21-23** But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who *were* in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything *that was* under *Joseph's* authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made *it* prosper.

No wonder Joseph means "adding." God was adding prosperity. Nearly everything that Joseph seemed to have tried to do, worked out wonderfully. God was with him, and one of the big reasons was, not only did God have something in mind, but Joseph was a worker. He fell into at least two major predicaments—slavery, and prison! But he ended up making "lemonade" out of both lemons. He ended up over a huge estate—a captain of the Pharaoh's guard is going to have great holdings. But, he did not know about anything that was going on except what Joseph told him, because Joseph was in charge. He was a slave, but he was this steward of his entire wealth, because he worked and was honest. He had diligence and integrity. And even though he was in terrible situations, he made the best of it. And then, when Potiphar's wife finally sent him to prison, through trickery and spite, he did the same thing in prison.

He was a man whose work ethic, and diligence, and integrity, and faith in God made him rise to the top every time.

Now, Philippians 2:12 and 13, that famous verse which says to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. And then, God will work in you. That is what we have here. It is the same thing. I want the principle out of those verses. Work! Get to work and be busy. Do something positive. God does help those who help themselves. It may not say that exactly in scripture, but the principle is there time and time again.

When we work in accordance to God's will, God adds to our labors. Jesus Himself says in Matthew 24:45-46, "Blessed is the servant of God whom He finds so doing at His coming." He wants to see us still working doing whatever we can to make lemonade from lemons.

Of course, our faith and our hope are totally in God, no matter what we are able to do, no matter what the situation. And I would like to show this in closing in Psalm 121. The Psalmist writes:

**Psalm 121:1-8** I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? My help *comes* from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD *is* your keeper; The LORD *is* your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, Nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore.

If we truly have this confidence, our response to catastrophe will be both positive, and constructive.