

Fire, Mudslides and #MeToo: Is God Punishing California?

Referring to God as a Reactionary seems odd, even to the writer. The term “reactionary” is mostly used in the context of politics. But then again, maybe it is the right word. We tend to be guided more by cultural theology than a biblical view of God.

As a resident of Southern California, I find myself on the receiving end of questions regarding how God works. The questions poised always seem to come back to God’s displeasure with Los Angeles, politics and entertainment. The questions, by the way, increase in proportion to the number of fires, earthquakes or mudslides.

The Christian community has its stock answers for why bad things happen and finds satisfaction, if not superiority, in being able to know the ways of God.

Those answers, I might add, never satisfy the skeptic or the serious student of the Word of God.

When a missionary suffers loss or death in a fire, flood or earthquake, is that the judgment of God for their sin and rebellion? Or is that the work of Satan? I choose to embrace a theology that God is good. A.W. Tozer says that when we speak of God as good, we refer to His essential nature:

“Divine goodness, as one of God’s attributes, is self-caused, infinite, perfect and eternal. Since God is immutable, He never varies in intensity of His loving-kindness. He has never been kinder than He is right now, nor will He ever be less kind.”

The goodness of God is the foundation of our faith and our expectation. When we begin with the idea of a God who always

does good and who loves us, then our expectation meets our experience. That simple shift in thinking is remarkably powerful because it realigns us with God's eternal kingdom. We begin to operate from a perspective of abundance and favor instead of a perspective of poverty and struggle.

Some people embrace a theology that God inflicts evil on people to teach them a lesson or to make them holy. This view usually fails to take into account the consequences of living in a "fallen" world that is imperfect.

As a Christ-follower, I embrace that God is all-powerful and sovereign over all things. However, the use of His power is qualified by His other attributes like mercy and love. When we isolate one of His attributes from the rest of His character we cast God in a non-biblical light and make it difficult to understand His love. {eo}

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