

Why Does God Allow Crises

by George Miley

God allows crises to come into our lives as Christians to cause us to pray, to attack human pride, to teach us dependence, to speak to us, for practical reasons, and to hinder Satan's work.

Scripture: Exodus 14:11-12, Joshua 7:2, Matthew 6:33, Colossians 2:3

Topics: "Divine Judgment", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of crises and how God uses them to deal with sin and get our attention. He uses the example of the Israelites in the book of Joshua, where they experienced failure and defeat after their initial success. The preacher emphasizes that God judges success differently than we do and that we should not become prideful in our own accomplishments. He also highlights the importance of examining our hearts and allowing God to speak to us during times of crisis.

Transcript

This talk was given in the main auditorium on board the O.M. ship Dulos. The continuous noise in the background is the sound of the ship's main generators in the engine room. A sound which never ceases day and night whilst the ship is operating normally.

Now why does God allow crises to come into our lives as Christians? I've got a few points down here that I'd like to share with you because I think it's important as we go back to prayer for us to understand what the Lord wants to do in times like this. Why does God allow crises? First of all, he allows crises to cause us to pray. He allows crises to cause us to pray.

Now you say, well, we can pray anytime. That's true, but it's in times of crises that we end up praying more. Turn to Acts chapter 9. This is something that God does not only with us, but we see many times in the scripture God does.

And as I was thinking about an example of this, my thoughts went to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. This last week we have spent a lot of time in prayer and we have not only been praying for the bills, but we've been praying for a lot of other things. And I believe God allows crises to come in order to get us more into prayer.

And as we pray, we are preparing the ground before us and praying about all kind of things. Last week, we were praying for South America. We're praying for Asia.

We're praying for China. We're praying for personnel. We're praying for God's guidance, seeking the Lord together.

And I know last week I spent hours and hours in prayer that I would not have spent if there hadn't been a crisis. Now look at Paul's life, Acts 9, beginning to read at verse 8. Saul got up from the ground. This is after the Lord spoke to him.

And though his eyes were open, he could see nothing. And leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight.

And neither ate nor drank. Now, I can just, can you just imagine Paul? One thing about Paul was he had a vision. He had drive.

And he was always on the move. And he was on the move persecuting the Christians, or he was on the move planting churches. But he was on the move.

Now, can you just imagine Paul's situation? Here he is, energy to burn, but what happens? He's blind. Can't see anything. Look at verse 10.

Now, there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias. And the Lord said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, behold, here am I, Lord.

The Lord said to him, Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas, for a man from Tarsus named Saul. For behold, he is praying. Paul was praying.

Why was he praying? There wasn't anything else he could do. He was blind. And God had stopped him, boom, right in his tracks.

And I'm sure Paul was totally frustrated. And the only thing he could do was pray. He's praying.

Now, God does that to us. You see, we're full of energy. We're full of power.

We're full of vision. We're full of go. Boy, that's one thing you learn on a ship, go.

We're all in the go mentality. And God uses crises to come to stop us and to make us pray and to give us more time in prayer. Now, there's another reason God allows crises to develop.

He allows crises to develop to attack human pride. God wants to attack human pride. Look at Daniel chapter 4. In Daniel chapter 4, we see God's dealing with this man, Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar was a secular king. But he was an instrument in the hand of God. God was working his purposes through Nebuchadnezzar.

But in order for Nebuchadnezzar to be a tool in God's hand, God had to deal with Nebuchadnezzar's pride. The more God does with a person, the more he has to deal with his pride. You want God to use you? The more God uses you, the more he's got to deal with your pride.

Because you see, men cannot differentiate what is of God and what is of man. God pours his life through you. What happens? People get helped.

What happens when people get help? They start praising the human instrument. And so the more God uses a person or the more God uses a group of believers, the more he has to deal with pride. The more blessing, the more crucifixion.

Now God wanted to use Nebuchadnezzar. In order to use him, he had to deal with him. Look at verse 28.

All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. This was a dream that God gave Nebuchadnezzar, told Nebuchadnezzar, warned Nebuchadnezzar that he was going to deal with his pride if he didn't watch himself. Verse 29.

12 months later. You know, brothers and sisters, we so often forget. This lesson that we're going through right now, this is a lesson that some of us have been through many times.

But we have to go through it again and again and again. Why? Because we so easily forget. God had spoken to Nebuchadnezzar very clearly about this, but 12 months later, he had forgotten.

12 months later, he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. The king reflected and said, is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power for the glory of my majesty? Can't you just see Nebuchadnezzar walking out on the balcony, looking out over the city of Babylon? Can't you just see his heart filled with pride? Look at this great city that I have built. Look how powerful I am.

Look how great I am. You know, the same danger can be in the work of God. The same danger can be on the Dulos.

We can walk through the Dulos. Look at what we have done. We can see people coming to the program.

Look at what we have done. Look at the lineup, boy, we've lined these things up. People get blessed in the meetings.

We can think, boy, look what we've done. So Nebuchadnezzar's heart was filled with pride. Verse 31, while the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven saying, King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared.

Sovereignty has been removed from you. And you will be driven away from mankind. And your dwelling place will be with the beast of the field.

You will be given grass to eat like cattle. And seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever he wishes. Immediately, the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled.

He was driven away from mankind, began eating grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws. What did God do when Nebuchadnezzar's heart was filled with pride? God brought him right down to the ground.

God allows crises to develop, to deal with pride, and to teach us again that we are dependent upon God. Now Nebuchadnezzar learned that lesson. Look at verse 34.

But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven. My reason returned to me. I blessed the Most High.

I praised and honored him. Who lives forever. For his dominion is an everlasting dominion.

And his kingdom endures from generation to generation. Look at verse 37. This is Nebuchadnezzar's testimony.

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven. For all his works are true and his ways are just. And he is able to humble those who walk in pride.

You know, brothers and sisters, the most wonderful experience that a human being can have is to have God dealing with him or her. God dealt with Nebuchadnezzar. God was ruthless with Nebuchadnezzar.

Took him as the greatest king on earth. Took him right down into the dust. But when God finished with Nebuchadnezzar, what did Nebuchadnezzar say? I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven.

For all his works are true and his ways are just. That's what happens when God deals with us and we surrender to it. We accept it.

We embrace it and acknowledge his authority over us. And God allows crises to develop to show us that we are nothing. We're not going forward by our strength, our ship, our vision, our drive.

We are dependent upon God and either Jesus works or the whole business comes to a stop. And we need that experience over and over again. Now, another reason God allows crises.

During crises, he can more easily speak to us because our eyes are upon him. Turn to Joshua chapter 7. During crises, God can more easily speak to us because our eyes are upon him. God wants to get our attention.

And we have an example of that in Joshua chapter 7, the well-known story of Ekan. Look at verse 2. Now, Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-Avon, east of Bethel, and said to them, go up and spy out the land. So the men went up and spied out Ai.

They returned to Joshua and said to him, do not let all the people go up. Only about 2,000 or 3,000 men need go up to Ai. Do not make all the people toil up there, for they are few.

Now, what was happening? Joshua and the people of Israel were in the midst of a successful campaign. They were on the move, and they had known some real successes. They knew the success of Jericho.

It took the whole city just by walking around the city, and God gave them the city. What do you think the people of Israel thought? They thought, boy, we're moving for God. We are doing what God told us to do, taking the land.

And God's blessing is obviously upon us. Look at what happened in Jericho. Boy, if you doubt that God's blessing is upon us, look at what happened to Jericho.

Oh, and here they were. They were really rejoicing, sending out tremendous prayer letters, and getting their pictures in the newspaper. God is moving.

They were all excited. They were, the whole machine was just all moved up. But there was sin in the camp, and God wanted to deal with the sin.

How could he, how could he deal with his sin? Boy, as long as they were moving, having all these successful campaigns, you know, they were thinking about all the tremendous things that God was doing. Well, God did something. He brought a crisis.

Verse 4, so about 3,000 men from the people went up, but they fled from the men of Ai, and the men of Ai struck down about 36 of their men and pursued them from the gate as far as Shinarim. And struck them down on the descent. So the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

Do you think there can never be failure in the work of God? Some people think, boy, if God is with us, huh, never going to be any failure. Just going from strength to strength. That's what some people think.

See, that's not what the Bible teaches us. God judges success on a different level than we judge it. And God's looking at the end, you see.

Now, God allowed failure to come at Ai. Why did he allow failure? He allowed failure in Ai because he wanted the end of the story to be successful. And he knew for the end to be successful, he had to deal with his people.

He had to let failure come so he could speak to them because there was sin in the camp. And they weren't sensitive to the fact that there was sin in the camp. Verse 6, Joshua tore his clothes, fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the Lord until the evening.

Both he and the elders of Israel, and they put dust on their heads. I know, brothers and sisters, I don't think that we have a sense that there's an Achan in the camp on the Thulos. I don't think we have a sense that there's great sin on the ship.

There's always somebody who comes up with this idea, when things don't go the way we plan, you know, maybe there's an Achan in the camp, maybe there's sin in the camp. And, you know, those of us who are in positions of responsibility, I think that we are just so thankful for every one of you. You know, we just sense on the ship a tremendous spirit of cooperation this week of prayer that we had last week.

I think we sense just a tremendous way that the entire ship was just behind this, people were praying. I think we sense on the ship that there's a real hunger for the things of the Lord. And we are just so encouraged with all of you.

Of course, God sees our hearts. The Holy Spirit lives down on A deck, B deck, down in the cargo holes, down in the engine room, places where the most of us don't get to. And He knows the situation.

And in times of crisis, our eyes are upon the Lord. And He can more easily speak to us. And I believe that as we wait upon the Lord for His green light for South America, we need to examine our hearts.

Now, we don't need to take three months to examine our hearts, but maybe some minutes. Each one of us waiting upon the Lord, Oh, Lord, is there some wicked way in me that you want to show me? He's not a witch hunt, but just opening our hearts before the Lord. Do you want to speak to us about anything, individually or as a ship body? And God allows times of crisis to come that He might more easily speak to us.

Now, another point about crises, point number four. Sometimes there are practical factors involved. Turn to Colossians chapter two.

Sometimes there are practical values involved and God allows crises to come. And it seems to us that God is not answering our prayers, but God has another plan. Colossians chapter two, verse three.

Speaking of the Lord Jesus, Colossians two, three, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. You know, I remember on the Logos, when we went to the Red Sea for the first time, we wanted to go to Ethiopia first. We were going to go to Ethiopia, Sudan, Jordan.

We really wanted to go to Ethiopia first. And through a series of events, it turned out better for us to go to Sudan first and then go back to Ethiopia. And I was very much against this because it would cost more money in fuel.

But we just got to a situation where we had to go to Sudan first. We couldn't understand it. Why do we go to Sudan first? Why are we in Sudan? The Yom Kippur War in October, 1973 broke out and all travel in the Red Sea, all movement of ships north was prohibited.

You could go south, but you couldn't go north. And if we had gone to Ethiopia first, and if we'd been in Ethiopia when that war broke out, we would not have been able to get to Sudan. But since we were in Sudan when the war broke out, we could go to Ethiopia.

Now, God knew that we didn't. And in our whole thing of praying about this March the 20th date, you know, some people, they like to just, you know, take a rigid stand with God. We are believing that God is going to do this.

You know, I personally always find it just a little bit difficult when people have, you know, talk as though they got a telephone link with God and it's all on the computer right out, you know. In prayer, there is the element that we are the creature and God is the creator and we are seeking his will. And you know, God may know some things that we don't know.

Is there going to be a revolution in Trinidad at just the dates that we got to be there? You know, maybe God knows and we don't know. I tell you, when I'm praying, I just want to just give God the final authority to answer that prayer or not. The Bible says, ask.

And I believe we should ask. But at the same time, God is God and he knows things we don't know. And sometimes God allows crises because there are practical factors involved.

Sometimes he allows delays because there are practical factors involved. He knows things we don't know. He understands the weather.

He understands the political situation. He understands thousands and thousands of things that are operating on this ship that we don't understand. And so sometimes God allows crises and delays for that reason.

Now, there's another factor about crises. Satan can also hinder the work of God. And I believe with all of my heart that Satan is hindering money coming in for the work of God.

Turn to Daniel chapter 10. In Daniel chapter 10, we have a very clear scriptural revelation of how the devil can hinder the work of God. Now, understand this.

There are two main spiritual forces in the universe, God and Satan. Compared with God, Satan's power is infinitesimal. God is going to destroy Satan with the breath of his mouth.

In fact, Satan is already destroyed, but God hasn't fully implemented it yet. So, there's no rivalry between God and Satan. And I tell you, I have no fear of Satan.

When Jesus is inside of me, boy, there's nothing Satan can do to get me. I don't have to worry about that. But Satan does have power.

God has allowed Satan to have power, and Satan does have power. And why God allows Satan power, I don't understand, but God has allowed Satan certain power. And Satan can hinder the work of God.

Daniel 10. Here we have a prayer that Daniel prayed that was hindered and delayed. Daniel 10, 10.

Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. And he said to me, O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright. For I have been sent to you.

This seems to be an angel. I was sent to you. And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.

Then he said to me, Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before God, your words were heard. I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for 21 days.

Now, who is this prince of the kingdom of Persia? Well, Daniel prayed. And this seems to be an angel was sent from God with the answer. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia resisted and held up and delayed this messenger from God.

Now, anything that's opposing God must be from Satan. So this must be one of Satan's generals or something. I don't know.

But something from Satan hindering God. Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me. For I've been left out there with the kings of Persia.

And here we get an insight into the spiritual warfare that is going on in the world. Look at Iran today. What is happening in Iran? Some people think the communists are behind it.

I don't say they're not behind it. But I tell you who I believe is behind it more than the communists. I believe Satan is behind it.

What is happening in Afghanistan? What is happening in Turkey? Why is the Muslim world so unreached? You know what I believe? I believe it is Satan and his host are opposing what God wants to do in that part of the world. I believe Satan is opposing laborers going into the harvest fields of the world. I believe that people, God's called them to be on the mission field.

They're home today. Good Christians, worshiping the church, teaching Sunday school. But they should be on the mission field.

And the devil has kept them from being there. And here's the tremendous thing. Satan works.

But God is so wise and so powerful and so great and so mighty. He can actually use the works of Satan for his glory. Look at the crucifixion of Christ.

Satan was there, boys. Satan was working in Judas. Satan was doing all kinds of things.

But God was also working and he used actually Satan's work to bring the greatest victory over Satan that God has ever brought. In our situation, we have prayed. God has spoken, I believe.

The money has been hindered. What happens? As we keep praying, we keep praying. What happens? Poor old Satan.

You know, he gets his teeth knocked in for what he did himself. You know, when we first got this ship, you know what happened? We started getting delayed, delayed, delayed. Every port, we'd be delayed one day, delayed two days.

You know what we decided as leaders? We decided, look, the next time we are delayed, we're going to pray. And we're going to keep praying until we go. Do you know what happened? We got delayed in the next port.

We went to prayer. I think from then on, boy, we started leaving on time. The old devil thought, man, if I stop them from going, they're going to kick me right in the teeth, man.

I better let them go. And I want to tell you this. This is a way to beat Satan.

You see, Satan has his ways of working. Now we're in God's army. We're fighting a spiritual battle.

Satan has his ways of working. God has his ways of working. How does God work? Through prayer.

And when Satan hits us, we hit him back. Pow. And pretty soon he gets a bloody mouth and, you know, he starts just laying off a little bit.

And I believe as we go to prayer, boy, we're going to see the devil running with his tail between his legs. We know he doesn't have a tail. But here is the power that we have together.

You see, 300 of us waiting upon God. And I tell you, Satan, and the more Satan resists, the more we pray. That's how to win over him every time.

Now another point about crises. Why does God allow crises? Character is built more through testing than it is when everything goes according to plan. Why does God allow crises? He wants to build character.

And character is built through crises. Now as I was looking for a good example of this, because there are examples of all these things through the Bible, somehow my attention was drawn to Hebrews 11, chapter, verse 17. The account of Abraham and Isaac or the recount of Abraham and Isaac.

Why does God allow crises? He wants to build character. Character is built through the crises. And God is going to allow many crises to come in your life because through it, it's going to build character.

Hebrews 11, 17. By faith. Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac.

And he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son. God said to Abraham, I'm going to give you a son. Abraham said, I don't believe you're going to give me a son because I'm too old.

So Abraham waited many years. Finally, he believed God. He and Sarah gave him a son.

Once God gave him a son, God said, okay, take that son off him on the altar. So you Abraham, you said, look God, you gave me the son. Now you're telling me to offer the son.

Doesn't make sense as a crisis. We think we have a crisis. It's really a crisis.

Verse 18. It was he to whom it was said in Isaac, your seed shall be called. He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead from which he also received him back in the type.

What does it mean? Abraham could not understand this. Look, God, you promised me years ago. You give me a son.

I didn't believe you. Then I believe you gave me a son. Now the son is grown.

You tell me to offer him. I don't understand it. But Abraham said to God, listen, I believe if you want me to do it, you can even raise him from the dead.

You know, brothers and sisters, how this ship came to be. The formula is very simple. Very, very simple.

Here is the formula. There is a God who created the whole universe. This God is able to do anything.

And as we pray, he can and will do anything. And all we have to do is get his will. Once we know his will, we pray and he works.

It's just that simple. And you can get all your newspapers, read the newspapers. You can look at the price of oil.

You can look at inflation. You can look at whatever you want to. But you see, God is greater than it all, greater than the price of fuel, greater than inflation, greater than anything.

And he's able to work. And he's able to send this ship to South America. And I personally, although I may be wrong, I haven't gotten a telephone link up with heaven, but I believe God wants this ship to go to South America on March the 20th.

And I'm ready personally to give myself the prayer until it happens. And I believe it's going to happen. And I am inviting you to join me in prayer.

God is going to work through the crisis. And through the crisis, he builds character. One more point.

Through crises, God reveals his power and his mercy most clearly. God reveals his power and his mercy most clearly in times of crisis. Exodus chapter 14.

You know, we were meeting together last night. We were thinking, what shall we do? Shall we say, well, line up another port in Scotland. Somebody wants us to come to Aberdeen.

Okay, let's go there. Man, probably more snow there than it is here. Where is the end of this? You see, we line up Aberdeen, then the money doesn't come in.

We go to London, the money doesn't come in. We go to Portsmouth, the money doesn't come in. We go to Plymouth.

You know, there's no end to this. You know what one brother said? He said, you know, our whole time in South America, what is the one thing that people, that we remember more than anything else, the one thing we talk about, of course, there are many things to talk about, but this brother was thinking about Argentina. This ship's sailing toward Argentina and no permissions.

Bob and Gene there in Buenos Aires about to have a heart attack. And I'm sitting there in Germany about to have a heart attack. George Burr was sitting in London.

We're all about to have a heart attack. Let's telephone the Argentine embassy in Bonn, see if we can get some friends. And at the last minute, God did it.

Now, what happened? A crisis developed. And in that crisis, God's power, God's mercy, God's love was most clearly revealed. Now, don't misunderstand that because remember in Trinidad last year, we're also praying God didn't answer that prayer.

The whole history of our work has been God answering some fantastic prayers, but there's some prayers he didn't answer. Trinidad, we didn't get into Trinidad, you know. And God also has a plan with that.

Just keeps us humble, boy, just keeps us humble. If God answered every prayer, we'd think, boy, we're the most spiritual people around. But you know, it's not the truth.

We prayed some prayers that God hasn't answered. Even Billy Jones prayed some prayers God hasn't answered. I can tell you some of it if you want to know.

Exodus chapter 14, verse 11. Here was Moses. Boy, he was in a crisis.

Then they said to Moses, is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you've taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Now, here's the people of God. You see, here they are in Egypt. What are they doing? Complaining.

Where is the Messiah? Where is the deliverer? So, God sends a deliverer, takes them out of Egypt. What happens? Here they are, the Red Sea on one side, the Egyptian army on the other side. What do they do? Boy, I tell you, they change their story very quick.

They say to Moses, look, what are you doing bringing us out here? It's all your fault. They were in a crisis. Verse 12.

Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? Is that what they said to Moses? Boy, I thought they said something else. For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness. Moses said to the people, do not fear.

Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see before again. The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.

And of course, we know what happened. In the midst of this crisis, God did one of the greatest natural miracles that he's ever done in the history of the world. And the whole history of Israel, they're looking back through the Red Sea, through the Red Sea.

Your father's brought you through the Red Sea, you see. But it was in this crisis that God's power and mercy and love were most fully revealed.

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