

EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON?

Not long ago a couple of people were telling me about the recent tragedy that happened on June 12 at the Eastlake Community Church in Moneta. In case you may not have heard about it, many people had gathered in a large tent in the parking lot to celebrate the church's 20th anniversary when a gale-force wind caused the tent to collapse. Nearly two dozen people were injured and 11 were taken to the hospital. One man, founding member Bob Stouffer, was killed. One of the two people telling me about the tragedy gave his opinion as to why he believed it happened. The other man responded, "No, the devil did it. He didn't like the good the church was doing so he put an end to it."

Well is that why it happened? If our answer to that question is "yes," we might then ask ourselves if we think the devil is to blame for every bad thing that happens to Christians. We might *also* ask **if, or why**, God allows the devil to do what he does. Here are some thoughts. . .and more questions.

First, I think that if the devil is behind the suffering of all Christians, then he is more powerful than I thought. In the book of Job, the devil does wreak

all kinds of havoc on Job and those he loves, but only with God's permission. God set parameters for just how much the devil could do. So does that mean that God gave the devil permission to stir up the wind at Eastlake? And if so, was what happened somehow God's will then? My interpretation of scripture, and my relationship with God, doesn't allow for any circumstance in which that would be God's will. God is LOVE, and love does not inflict tragedy. I'm reminded of how Jesus said that God loves to give **good** gifts to His children. On the other hand, I'm also reminded of what some Christians said about Hurricane Katrina – that the horror of that event was evidence of God's anger toward immoral and godless New Orleans. But then, why did God punish the faithful Christians living there along with the godless?

In chapter 13 of the gospel of Luke, a crowd following Jesus questioned Him about two tragedies that had recently happened and asked Him why they happened. One was the slaughter of a group of Galileans who had gone to the temple to make a sacrifice, when Pontius Pilate's men killed them. The other was when the tower of Siloam collapsed on 18 people and killed them.

In response, Jesus first asked them two questions. He asked if they thought those Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they were the ones who were killed. He also asked if they thought the ones who died when the tower collapsed were more evil than anyone else who lived in Jerusalem. Then He said, "No, but I tell you that unless you repent, you too will all perish." What did He mean by this answer?

By His "no" response, Jesus was clearly saying that it is wrong to assume that victims of tragedies are worse sinners than anyone else and must have deserved what happened to them. But His bigger point was that the right response to any

suffering we witness or hear about is to focus on our own lives, our own sin, and our own hearts. Our question should be: "If that had happened to me, would I have been ready?" One day we will meet the Lord, face to face, and it could happen far sooner than we anticipate.

But what about the question which began our discussion? Is the devil the cause of our suffering? The answer is "maybe". Maybe our suffering has come by way of satanic enticement, or maybe by our own sinful desires apart from his "help." Maybe someone else's evil deed caused it, or maybe someone's negligence – or *maybe it was simply human error*. Maybe we failed to take warnings seriously, or maybe we never even knew about them. Maybe. But as Jesus told the crowd, the question isn't "Why?" The question is: Would I have been ready to meet the Lord? Am I ready? It's not about the devil's power or involvement. It's about our relationship with God. Makes me think of a church marquis I saw. It said, "Fear asks **what if?** But faith says **even if.**"

Everything does happen for a reason. In that last paragraph I listed quite a few possible reasons for suffering - but the reason ***nearly always isn't*** because the sufferer deserved God's punishment. God punished sin, once and for all, in His Son, on the cross. But it also wasn't likely caused by the devil. Let's not credit him with more power than God has allowed him.

We live in a world where bad things happen to bad people, bad things happen to good people, and even good things happen to bad people. Every person and every situation is different. . .but this we absolutely know: "Nothing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord".

I love you! Susan

WEEKLY CHURCH EVENTS

AA MEETINGS

Mondays, July 6, 13, 20 and 28 at 7 pm in the fellowship hall.

WEEKLY COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY

Wednesdays, July 1, 8, 15, and 29 from 11:00 am to noon in our PBBC fellowship hall. Come join us! We are studying the gospel of Luke. Invite your friends! There's always room for more! (No Bible study on July 22.)

WEEKLY CHOIR REHEARSAL

Wednesdays, July 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29 at 5:30 p.m. in the choir room. Rob and our choir have room for you! Join them this Wednesday and check it out!

REGULAR MONTHLY EVENTS

PICKER'S & FIDDLER'S MUSIC FEST

Saturday, July 11 from 10:00 to noon in the fellowship hall (and every 2nd Saturday of the month). Every second Saturday of the month you can experience the Grand Ole' Opry right here in Bassett! You'll enjoy the musical talents of true professionals as they share the best in gospel and bluegrass music - free of charge! Invite your friends and neighbors, and feel free to bring your instrument and play/sing too! We'll have some breakfast goodies and coffee for you - also free of charge. It's a great time!

COMMUNITY MEAL

Thursday, July 16 at 5:30 pm in the fellowship hall (and every 3rd Thursday of the month). All are welcome to come and help serve, eat, and get to know our neighbors of Henry County and Bassett. Workers should arrive at 5:15. If you would like to contribute a dessert, contact Lindy Koger at 276-734-2096.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, July 20 at 5:30 pm in the conference room

DEACONS' MEETING

Tuesday, July 21 at 7 pm in the conference room

FEED AMERICA FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Tuesday, July 28 at the Light Electric Building, 24A Governor Stanley Hwy, 12:30 – 1:30. There is also a worship service beforehand, at 9:00 a.m. and a lunch, free of charge, is offered at 11:30 am at the same place. All are welcome!

SPECIAL EVENTS THIS MONTH

"RED, WHITE & BLUEGRASS" SERVICE

Sunday, July 5 in our sanctuary at 11 am.

Come worship our great God and also celebrate our nation's 250th birthday! Dress casually and wear your red, white and blue. Have some cookies and lemonade on the porch afterward. Invite your friends and neighbors!

FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT!

Friday, July 17 at 8:00 pm on the church tennis court. Come enjoy some popcorn, drinks and a family-approved movie.

EMMAUS TEAMING MEETINGS

Saturdays, July 18 and 25 in the Rakestraw Fellowship Hall from 9 am to 3 pm. We welcome this wonderful Christian group's use of our fellowship hall in preparation for an upcoming retreat. For more information, contact Donna Ziglar. (Teaming also on August 1 and 15)

QUARTERLY BUSINESS MEETING

Sunday, July 19 in the Rakestraw Fellowship Hall after the worship service. Lunch will be included. All are welcome to come hear about the plans and ministries of our church. We will also need to vote on one or more items so you're especially needed for a quorum.

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

Thursday, July 23 from 1 – 6 pm in the Rakestraw Fellowship Hall. Come, if you are able, and provide this life-giving gift. Snacks and drinks will be provided.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

CHILDREN'S SABBATH

SUNDAY, AUGUST 23 AT 11 AM IN THE SANCTUARY

Parents of children, please especially mark your calendars and plan to be present for this worship service which will highlight the children of our church and our Little Angels children. We are planning on having the children sing and there will be a special children's sermon. Come and celebrate God's gift of these young ones! Invite your family and friends too!

STAFF VACATIONS: PLEASE NOTE

Freda: July 13 - 17

Pastor Susan: July 20 – July 26

Rob Bailey: August 1 - 8

**FROM THE DIRECTOR OF LITTLE
ANGELS EARLY LEARNING CENTER**

A NOTE FROM THE MUSIC MINISTRY

CHURCH PRAYER LIST