

**“Tsunami”**  
By: Doug Warren

**Why does God allow such horrific tragedies like the tsunami in Asia?**

Many, many questions come up when you start thinking about the cataclysmic destruction brought on by the recent earthquake and resultant tsunami in the Indian Ocean. We have all heard the various estimates of nearly 200,000 people killed and hundreds of thousands who have lost everything. For me it came home most poignantly hearing the report of our church’s missionary doctor who is leading a medical response team in Indonesia. The county of Lhoong, where they are providing aid, consisted of 28 villages prior to the tsunami, but has now been reduced to only four. The other 24 towns have been utterly wiped out. How do we respond when faced with such staggering loss?

Our first response needs to be grief. Jesus called us to weep with those who weep. The loss of any human life is to be mourned. As we grieve with these people we have never met from the other side of the globe we are given a precious opportunity to see creation as it really is.

We have so much health, safety, and blessings that we look at disasters as a shocking aberration to the norm, but as we grieve for those with such loss, we are jarred from our own comfort. As we grapple with the questions of why God would allow such things, we are faced with answers from the right, left, and the gospel. You may have heard conservatives saying, “God sent this tsunami to judge the people in this region.” You may have also read liberals bemoaning such nonsense as “horse feathers” and assuring readers that God of course would not do such a thing. He has set the tectonic plates in their places and leaves them to move as they please.

The gospel of Jesus Christ offers an all together different response. God is in control of every hair that falls from your head. He has not wound up the universe like a clock and left it running. But how can He be all powerful and in control of such horrors and still be good and merciful?

We find the breath-taking answer in the cross of Jesus. Why was it necessary for Jesus to die in order to redeem His people? Why couldn’t He just teach us about love and peace and lead a movement to change the world? Why did He actually have to die a horrible death full of such suffering and anguish?

The Bible tells us that we see in the awfulness of Jesus’ death the answer to our problem of sin. It is a problem that affects all of creation. Often the biblical record of our fall into sin is presented in a peculiarly individualistic way. Christians with great intentions might say, “Your relationship with God has been broken by sin. If you will repent and trust Jesus, then your relationship with God will be restored.” But this is a twisted representation of what actually happened.

God tells us that the *whole* of creation was affected by humanity's insurrection. The ground itself was cursed. Thorns and thistles grow against the work of mankind. Wolves tear apart lambs. Rain no longer simply provides water for growth, but at times comes in torrents that cause mudslides, floods, and great destruction. We live on a fallen planet. The reason that "natural disasters" happen is not natural. This is not how life is meant to be. It is a cruel, terrifying wasteland. In the midst of this wasteland, we are blessed to see glimpses of God's beauty and blessing. We have His promise in the rainbow and the seal of His fingerprints in the tiniest flower. Both the terrors and the beauty are supposed to point us not just to the immensity of creation, but to the awesome splendor of their Creator and Redeemer.

Jesus died to rescue us from the death and destruction of this cracked planet. He has borne the penalty of sin not just in an individualistic way, but to the depths of the earth and the heights of the stars. He not only died to restore this broken creation, but He has risen in victory over the very terrors we bewail. He has promised to return and bring a new heavens, and new earth where the lion will lie down with the lamb—a restored creation where sin no longer invests the tectonic plates and the waves above them.

Why does God allow such horror now? He tells us in His Word, the Bible, that it is out of His merciful patience. He is giving us opportunity to see and repent that we might be saved not just from temporary ravages, but eternal ones. While God intends such things to be shocking, He does not allow them to be meaningless. Death and destruction, pain and misery, loss and grief are all the horrific results of man's rebellion against God.

I am not saying that the tsunami happened as a result of their sin. I am saying that it and many other horrors happen because of our collective sin. God graciously allows us to see these effects of our own sinfulness so that we might turn from our rebellion and seek His face.

He also calls us in the midst of these disasters to care for one another. As we wrestle with these difficult questions, let us grieve, repent, and then act. Act with true charity and kindness. We have all contributed to one another's suffering, let us now in the knowledge of His mercy be His instruments of healing.