

8/7/11

Job 38:4-18

IN A CRISIS? LET GOD TAKE CHARGE!

Good morning. It is good to be here and not in Madrid, Spain. I had the most wonderful introduction for my sermon already prepared and written this past Wednesday. It was perhaps the greatest sermon introduction of all time. It was a fantastic introduction on the subject of facing a crisis! But then something happened to me on Friday. I found myself in the middle of a crisis. Someone had hacked into my Yahoo email account during the night. They erased my saved emails and my entire contact list. Before they deleted my contacts, they sent a message to everyone on my list. The message claimed that I had flown on a sudden emergency trip to Madrid, Spain. The message claimed I was robbed, my passport was stolen, and I was left penniless. The message pleaded with each email recipient to send me cash immediately. I hope none of you sent any money! Needless to say, all day my phone was ringing off the hook. The church lines were tied up for hours, too. Words cannot describe the sunken feelings, the sudden loss of energy, the helpless feeling of futility, the anger, and the urge to scream that comes in a crisis like that. You call Yahoo and wait on hold for almost an hour; you call your bank for fear the culprit sucked your accounts dry; and you notify your credit card company to watch for any unusual purchases in foreign countries. Here I was, preparing to preach on facing a crisis, and suddenly I was experiencing a major crisis of my own!

No one likes dealing with a crisis. A crisis can bring pain, tears, complications, problems, and financial disaster. A crisis can break hearts, break relationships, and break your bank. Yet, crises are part of living in a fallen, sinful world. Try as we might, we can't avoid them. Sooner or later we will have to face a crisis: be it world-wide or local; be it a security break of your email, or a military, economic, social, political, medical, personal, marital, or family crisis, it's going to happen. Some people try to run away, hide from, or escape the responsibility of dealing with their crisis. Some try to handle a crisis by relying on alcohol, drugs, or food to get them through. Many experience stress, anxiety, panic, or fear in the time of crisis. How do you react in the time of a crisis?

Often there is the temptation to blame one of two sources for the crisis. Most people tend to blame others or blame God! "She caused it! It's his fault! God, how could you let this happen to me?" Rarely do we ever hear, "Oops! It was my fault!"

Looking for the source of your crisis? Have you considered any of the following as the source behind a crisis in our life? One: our poor choice or decision; our stupidity.

Two: people: those we hang out with or are close to; or other people far away who do something that results in our facing a crisis like congress, a dictator, a terrorist, or a computer hacker. Three: a mechanical breakdown or technological glitch like the hot water pipe to the washer broke, our computer crashed, or the neighbor kid kicked a football that sliced into and through our front window. Four: world events such as an economic recession, a tsunami, a draught, or war can weave its way in our life as a crisis. Five, sin, our sinfulness or the sinfulness of others can lead to a crisis for us. And six, perhaps the crisis is not really a crisis due to sin, but rather is a test designed to strengthen our faith and convictions.

We may never know the real cause to our crisis. And let me say that when you find yourself in a crisis, discovering the cause is not always the top priority! When the blood is gushing out from your child's teeth and gums, how it happened is not the main issue at that moment! Often what magnifies our fears and anxieties in a crisis is the sense or feeling that we have NO CONTROL over the situation. Let's be honest, we don't like it when we are not in control!

In our text, our LORD speaks to a man named Job. Job was in the midst of a crisis. Actually he was confronted with a number of crises. His entire family was killed, his livestock wiped out. He faced financial ruin. His health weakened and his entire body was covered with large, painful, burning boils that seeped puss and blood. And all of his friends suddenly found fault with him and criticized him without mercy. This Old Testament saint suffered in ways far beyond our human understanding. He suffered in ways that might drive someone of a lesser faith to drinking or suicide. But Job tried hard to hang in there and work through his crises.

I know that a lot of folks say that Job was a man of great patience. Nonsense! Anyone who says that must not have ever read the Book of Job! Job constantly complained, struggled over why this happened, insisted on his innocence of any wrong doing and therefore undeserving such trials and suffering.

Job goes on to criticize God. *"Hey God,"* he yells. *"Why am I suffering? It's your fault. You know I don't deserve this. I am a good man, a righteous man. You messed up on sending me all these ordeals. Stop hiding and come down here so I can give you a piece of my mind!"* Who did Job blame for his troubles in life? God! Why not? A lot of others do the same. Blame God. Curse God. Maybe for Job, this is one of those times that God appears not to know what He is doing! Job's blaming God, anyone else who blames God for a crisis, reminds me of the words of Ben Franklin who once said, *"Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain, and most fools do!"*

So finally, in chapter 38, God does come to Job. Only instead of letting Job rant and rave against God, blaming God for Job's crises, God asks, "**Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.**" The tables have turned. God begins to ask Job a series of questions, question which in no way can Job begin to answer.

What is the point of this litany of questions that God directs to Job? It is not really to make Job look like a fool. Rather the point is to show that God is our Creator and as our Creator He possesses more wisdom, knowledge, and power than we could ever fathom. We cannot understand all of God's ways. God has chosen to reveal only a miniscule of information about His thinking, plans, and ways. The point becomes this: since God is God and our Creator, and His power, knowledge, and ways are far greater than we could ever comprehend, trust in His Word and follow Him in faith. Don't argue with God or blame God when a crisis suddenly springs upon us! Believe that God still loves us, cares for us, and has the power to get us through whatever we face. Remember God promises, "**So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.**" No matter what crisis comes our way, no matter how strongly it tempts us to deny God, curse, God, or blame God, God will provide a way out for us.

My friends, as our Creator, God loves His creation. His great love for His creation moved Him to send Jesus. Imagine, God, the Creator of our vast universe, cares so much about our planet that God sent His Son to be our Savior, to die for our sins. On the cross, Jesus suffered the punishment for your sins, mine, and the whole world. Jesus suffered the punishment for my sins on the Cross! Let me hear you say it: "**Jesus suffered the punishment for my sins on the Cross!**" (Let the people say it.) Now if Jesus already suffered the punishment for our sins on Calvary's Cross some 1,980 years ago, then how can we think that our suffering in a crisis is a punishment from God???

When tempted to blame God for your crisis, remember these words from our LORD. Matthew 27:46: "**Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").** 2 Corinthians 5:21: "**God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**" And Isaiah 53:5: "**But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.**" These passages teach us that our crises are not a punishment from God!

Rather than blame God when a crisis comes, turn to God! God promises to help us, be there to encourage us, strength us to endure, and deliver us from all evil and all testing. **First**, believe and trust in His promises. The Scriptures are full of examples of God's faithfulness and deliverance. **Second**, remember the Cross and Empty Tomb. God truly loves you. The wall of sin has been removed; no longer does sin separates us from God. On the cross Jesus suffered the punishment for your sins. **Third**, remember that God is our Creator. This will take away our fears and anxieties in a crisis because we know that as our Creator God has the power to fulfill His promises and that God is always in control. And **fourth**, God is our Savior. He saved us from our sins; He can save us in times of crisis in our life!

No matter how bad the crisis may be, God promises that “**all things work for the good of those who love God.**” This is true! Despite all of hardships, energy, and efforts that my email crisis caused me, God brought good out of it for me. Many and many people on my contact list who received the bogus email thought I was in trouble and they willing stepped up and offered to help. Some I had not heard from for years, a few I had not seen for at least 20 years. The blessing from God was to be reminded of all the friends that I do have and how wonderful they are.

For Job, he suddenly realized his sinful pride that had kept him apart from God. He now realized that despite all he suffered, God still loved him and would bless him. Sometimes a crisis drives us to the only place we can find real deliverance and comfort: to God. God does NOT hold us accountable to understand and explain every crisis that happens in life. God does expect us to trust in Him, believe in Him, and walk with Him as He leads through the crises of life.

Because we live in a fallen, imperfect, and sinful world, things will not always happen as we envision. Sometimes things will appear to be a crisis. Then will come all sorts of doubts, puzzlements, temptations, emotions, and fears. We cannot keep them from coming. But the next time you are in a crisis, LET GOD TAKE CHARGE! Our LORD does love you! The proof is Jesus! IJN, amen!