

Untimely Death

When we are faced with the death of a young person by disease, accident or a victim of war, we are bound to ask the question, *'Why did God allow this to happen?'*

I have personally had to face this with the death of my firstborn grandchild.

I would like to share with you certain truths that were brought to my attention when I faced the untimely death of my grandchild.

These truths helped me to understand more how our Creator God views what to us is a tragedy.

How can this untimely death happen when God's Word, the Christian Bible, plainly states the following?

1 Peter 3:12 [NIV] *"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."*

Did my grandchild really *"do evil"* in her young life?

Psalms 91:9-11 [NIV] *"If you make the Most High your dwelling, even the LORD, who is my refuge, then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;"*

Where was God and His promised guardian angel at the death of my granddaughter?

Hebrews 13:5 [NIV] *"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

My young handicapped grandchild did **not lust** after riches, because she had the love of so many people in her very limited life.

How can we explain untimely death and suffering in the face of such promises by our Creator God?

God's Word, the Christian Bible, does give us an answer.

Before we get down to specifics, let us notice three important facts.

1. God never intended our present physical life to go on for ever

Hebrews 9:27 [NIV] *"Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,"*

This physical human body is designed to be a **temporary** dwelling place for our human spirit.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 [NIV] *"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,"*

Birth, life and death are a natural part of the existence that we are now experiencing.

James 4:13-15 [NIV] *"Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. **What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.** Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."*

“*The Lord’s will*” has two main meanings in His Word, the Christian Bible.

- a) God’s way of life, the laws He created and lives by, the law of love, that we are to obey.
- b) Refers to whatever God allows in the history of humanity, including suffering, mental pain and even untimely death.

Looking back at this physical life from the viewpoint of eternal life this present physical life will seem no longer than it takes to blink our eyes.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 [NIV] *“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”*

Our main focus in this physical life should be on the yet-unseen future spiritual life.

2. The eternal Creator God is in total control of all He created

Romans 8:28-30 [NIV] *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”*

It takes faith in the loving Creator God to believe this in the face of human tragedy.

This promise has certain conditions attached to it.

a) We love the Creator God as a friend

John 15:12-17 [NIV] *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.”*

We love God by loving other human beings and laying down our life, that is our time and substance, for their benefit.

This type of life will make us a friend of God.

b) We are called by God in a time that He chooses as Sovereign Creator God

God is creating a family of human beings to whom He will eventually give eternal life as a gift.

Just as in a large human family, God is planning His family.

Some will be the firstborn in that family and are being prepared in this life to work with Jesus Christ to become like the human Jesus Christ the first of the firstborn in that family.

[Read our article ‘*Life, Why Do Human Beings Exist?*’ and **Revelation 1:4-6** [NIV] and **Revelation 20:11-13** [NIV]]

3. God knows all things and is not limited in His power to supernaturally intervene

Psalms 139:1-4 [NIV] *“O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; **you are familiar with all my ways.** Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.”*

God’s knowledge includes even our very thoughts.

Psalms 103:14-19 [NIV] *“**for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.** As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children, with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.”*

God knows our physical and mental limitations and weaknesses.

Jeremiah 32:17-19 [NIV] *“Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. **Nothing is too hard for you.** You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the fathers’ sins into the laps of their children after them. O great and powerful God, whose name is the LORD Almighty, great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to all the ways of men; you reward everyone according to his conduct and as his deeds deserve.”*

Included in this unlimited power our Creator God has is the ability to heal, maintain and restore human life.

Yet many dedicated and faithful Christians have died early in life. Why?

Only God knows the heart of an individual person and He acts with each one personally to accomplish His purpose for giving that person human life.

Some reasons why some people die prematurely

a) **God allows some to die when their purpose for life has been fulfilled.**

Genesis 1:26-27 [NIV] *“**Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.**”*

At physical birth only half of God’s purpose for human beings is accomplished. The “image” means “a shadow of the real thing.”

We are given time in this physical life for God to accomplish the second, more important part of God’s purpose.

“Likeness” refers to the very character of God.

When the second purpose for life has been accomplished God can do two things.

Preserve this spiritual character in death awaiting the resurrection at Christ’s return.

Or to preserve that life as an example for others to follow.

Ephesians 2:8-10 [NIV] *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no-one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

God has “good works” for every person He calls to accomplish.

Paul is a good example of this.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 [NIV] *“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”*

Paul felt he was at the end of his life of being a bond slave of Jesus Christ and fulfilling the work given to him. But!

Philippians 1:20-26 [NIV] *“I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.”*

Paul, having suffered greatly since being called by Jesus Christ to be His bond slave, longed for death to end this pain and suffering.

Yet realised that God was extending his life for the benefit of others.

b) Some die because of their environment or the breaking of natural health laws.

In the more backward nations, malnutrition, lack of good sanitation and harsh living conditions bring on untimely death.

Few such people are being called by God at this time and will have their chance to come to know Jesus Christ as their Saviour in a future resurrected human life after Jesus Christ’s return to this life. **[Revelation 20:11-13]**

c) Some die because of a lack of faith in God as their healer.

James 5:14-15 [NIV] *“Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.”*

This promise is only applied or practiced in a limited form among Christian fellowships.

1 Corinthians 11:29-30 [NIV] *“For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.”*

This is in context of accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as their Saviour by accepting the bread and wine as the sacrificed body and blood of Jesus Christ, the practice being a ritual **not** a total surrender to the will of their Saviour.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform*

*any longer to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

Unless this happens in your life after accepting God's grace in Jesus Christ's sacrifice, the taking of the bread and wine is only a useless ritual.

Some have had an untimely death as a result of treating the sacrifice of Jesus Christ with such contempt.

Matthew 9:29 [NIV] *"Then he touched their eyes and said, **"According to your faith** will it be done to you";"*

Their healing was according to their faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:9-11 [NIV] *"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, **if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.**"*

Always remember that even if a person does die, as long as the Holy Spirit is working in them, their future is secure.

d) Some die as a living testimony to the work of God.

Hebrews 11:1 [NIV] *"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."*

Faith in the Creator God is the key that unlocks all the promises of God.

Hebrews 11:6 [NIV] *"**And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.**"*

The chapter then lists many people who had this faith yet died, most in violent circumstances.

Hebrews 11:39-40 [NIV] *"**These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.**"*

Died without receiving the promises of reward for serving God.

"*Together with us*" – to me this indicates that this form of witness through suffering and death is still being used by God as part of His Plan for all human beings.

1 Corinthians 10:13 [NIV] *"**No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. 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 stand up under it.**"*

God will **not** put us in a position of trial that is beyond our ability to endure, with His help.

The "way out" could be an untimely death.

Psalms 116:15 [NIV] *"**Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.**"*

Always remember this, a person who remains faithful to the commission Jesus Christ has given them to the end of their life, their death is very precious to their Creator.

A "saint" is a person who is set aside by God for a certain purpose and who is merciful in attitude.

True faith is knowing, believing and accepting that God will **not** allow a Christian to die until they have reached the end of the reason for their pilgrimage as a physical human being.

e) Time and chance happen to the innocent.

Remember that God is **not** calling the majority of human beings at this time to have their chance to receive salvation from deserved death due to their sins.

Revelation 12:9 [King James] *“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”*

God has allowed Satan to blind the vast majority of people as to their reason for existence.

Ecclesiastes 9:11 [NIV] *“I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favour to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all.”*

This refers to the vast majority of human beings **not** called by God at this time.

Luke 13:4 [NIV] *“Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them, do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?”*

These people just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

f) Untimely death could be a test for those left behind.

Job 1:13-22 [NIV] *“One day when Job’s sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, a messenger came to Job and said, “The oxen were ploughing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!” While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!” While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!” While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, “Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!” At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.” In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.”*

Job lost his whole extended family, those he employed and all his wealth, yet in spite of **not** understanding why, Job remained faithful to his Creator God.

Job 2:9-10 [NIV] *“His wife said to him, “Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!” He replied, “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.”*

With this type of response from Job’s wife you can see why Satan did **not** kill her along with the rest of the family.

Job 1:8-12 [NIV] *“Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no-one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.” “Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. “Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse*

you to your face.” **The LORD said to Satan, “Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.”** Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.”

Notice that God not only allowed Satan to destroy Job’s family and wealth, but initiated this onslaught, to test Job.

Matthew 10:34-39 [NIV] *“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. **Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”***

To follow Jesus Christ may mean we have to give up our family to remain faithful to the commission Jesus gives us.

g) As a supreme test of faith.

Luke 14:26-27 [NIV] *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. **And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”***

Notice “*even his own life*” to be a disciple of Jesus Christ may mean this happening to us physically.

Certainly it will involve our giving up our own desires and plans for our life.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Surrender of our will and a re-shaping of our thought patterns.

Facing untimely death dissolves our emphasis on the fleeting pleasure of all material aspects of life in this society.

Philippians 4:12-13 [NIV] *“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. **I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”***

All the trials and near death in Paul’s life since Jesus Christ had called him to fulfil a great work of taking the gospel message to the gentiles [non Jews] had helped Paul to find peace and contentment.

Proverbs 14:32 [NIV] *“... even in death the righteous have a refuge.”*

Can we trust God with our lives even when faced with death? I hope we all can.

Conclusion:-

Do these seven points distracts from the promises of God that we read at the beginning of this study?

No!

When we view this limited life from God’s perspective, that of One who is living in eternity, we can see that all of God’s Word is true.

Romans 8:38-39 [NIV] *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

I believe and live by this promise. Do you?