



know you will be feeling the hurt your children are enduring, and the extended pain of a parent. You know you will be doing all you can to rescue them from their pain; and you know you will always be there, supportive, helping in any way you can. **And how crushed you would be if your child, in his pain, blamed you for his problems and allowed those problems to come between you and him, at the very time you most wanted to be there to help him!**

In all of these ways, God is with us as our spiritual Father, no matter what comes into our lives. In the story of the Christian martyr, Stephen, do you remember how he described the One he saw at God's right hand? In every other account, Jesus is pictured as sitting, but when Stephen was being stoned he saw Him standing at God's right hand, as though the sharing of Stephen's suffering brought Him to His feet. That vivid word picture is a wonderful consolation to us as God's children, whenever we are hurting. We can know that, because of our pain, Jesus has been wrenched to His feet, and that He is reaching out to us, doing all He can to ease our pain and to bring relief from our suffering.

"How does He help?" Not through some miraculous act, for His use of miracles has always

been confined to the giving of new law or a new messenger; but God's greatest tools through the ages have been His use of providence: His use of people, governments, circumstances, and events, to bring about the things that are best, physically and especially spiritually, for His children.

So in times of trouble, He uses the hearts and hands and possessions of His other children — His church, His family in this world — to bring comfort and physical help to the children and even to the people of the world who are suffering. He uses governments, doctors, medicines, carpenters, counsellors — and in a comforting and natural-appearing way, slowly these people and things bring new hope to hopeless hearts. People learn to laugh again, and to feel thankfulness for the good that has come into their lives. The despair that Job felt when he said, *"My spirit is broken, My days are extinguished, the grave is ready for me,"* is replaced with the peace he



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# How

## Does God Work in our Lives?

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We cannot look at the troubles and the horrors in our world without realizing that it is an evil and dangerous place in which we live. Sadly, the first question that is often asked after some tragedy is, “Why did God do that?”

Perhaps this seemingly automatic accusation grows out of the fact that most humans recognize God as the all-powerful Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Therefore, the credit or blame for whatever happens is laid at His feet.

Do we forget the Garden of Eden? Do we forget God’s gift to man: the freedom to choose to love and obey Him, or to disobey Him? Do we forget that man brought sin into the world by his choice? No, God is not the instigator of evil. So, what are the causes?

● Many “natural” disasters occur in our world. Whether Satan — not through supernatural power but through the use of natural means — is the cause of a specific disaster, or whether it is the result of the originally-created laws of

nature having gone awry through sin’s entrance into the world, either directly or indirectly we can lay ALL problems at his feet. He is the enemy of God and the enemy of man, and his aim is to destroy us.

● Other tragedies are caused more *directly* by sin: the terrible violence that wreaks havoc on humanity when villains commit mass murder, when tribal groups slaughter other tribal groups, when alcoholism and drugs bring violence and death. All of these things happen in a world turned upside down by the consequences of sin.

● Then there are those horrors that we bring on ourselves by our bad decisions: lying, stealing, sexual immorality, abuse of our bodies, anger, hatred, and the list can go on and on....

God cannot undo the mess that man has made of his world, because He must allow us to have free will. His ultimate solution to the problem is His promise to take His children from this sin-cursed world to that perfect home that is being prepared for us.

But for the time that we must live here, He promises for His children — for those who love and obey Him — that He will make all things work together for our good: “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who*

*love God, to those who are called according to His purpose*” (Romans 8:28). Does that mean that we are hedged about by a wall of protection, as Satan said God had done for Job (1:10)? “*Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.*”

No, we are a part of this hurting world, and we may very well endure tragedy, untimely deaths of loved ones, storms of life and of nature, calamity and ongoing heartache.

But God will sustain us, as His Spirit strengthens us within our own spirits: “*For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man*” (Ephesians 3:16). He will use Satan’s very tools of harm and destruction to bring good into our lives if we will remain faithful to Him through the hardship. And He has promised, “*I will never leave you nor forsake you*” (Hebrews 13:5).

God portrays Himself as “our heavenly Father”. If you are a parent, and your children are suffering devastation, where will you be? You