

Jesus as Moral Teacher: Where does this leave us?

FOUR: Disturbing / Horrific / Extreme Events in the Bible

- ❑ How does God expect us to respond EMOTIONALLY to them?
 - He is not one-dimensional, and we should not be!
 - No Ostrich tactics: "There is no problem that cannot be solved by MORE sand"
 - He is not 'happy' about judgment, and He warns us to not be either.
- ❑ How does God expect us to respond INTELLECTUALLY to them?
 - Avoid 'hasty conclusions' and 'snap judgments'
 - *If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. [Proverbs 18:13]*
 - Watch for value-laden terms, *a la* Spin Doctors...
 - Fairness is critical: Both/All sides
 - *"The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him." [Proverbs 18:17]*
- ❑ How does God expect us to respond AS HIS CHILDREN to them?
 - A 5th-grade boy when told an embarrassing story about his dad...
 - And later as an adult son – 'not the whole story, I bet..'

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❑ He is not 'happy' about judgment ...

Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? ... For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live." [Ezek 18:23, 32]

Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live [Ezek 33:11]

"for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men. La 3:33

"By means of a rhetorical question, which anticipates an unequivocal negative response, Ezekiel spells out the basis for the exiles' hope: Yahweh's fundamental commitment is to human life, not to death. He finds no joy in anyone's death, not even that of a wicked person... What a remarkable declaration of divine patience and mercy this is.

"Yahweh's offer of life is gracious in the extreme, but it is both principled and contingent. Among the laws by which his justice is administered is the law of human freedom. Yahweh will not impose his grace on a rebellious people. They must accept responsibility for both the course of their lives and their destiny. Without repentance God cannot forgive and the death sentence remains inevitable. But where repentance occurs, grace triumphs and the sinner is granted life, full and abundant.

[Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*]

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❑ ... and He warns us to not be either.

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the LORD see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him. [Pr 24:17–18.]

“God resents it when you gloat at another’s suffering (17:5), so much so that he might suspend your enemy’s punishment just to deprive you of your smug glee. Since the suffering results from God’s wrath, it must be a punishment for an offense, not an accidental misfortune. This teaches that you must not take pleasure in suffering even if it is deserved.

Prov 20:22 warns against seeking revenge or even intending to do so. The present maxim goes further, condemning an unworthy feeling even when it does not lead to vengeance. ...

Why is *schadenfreude* thought to anger God? Perhaps God resents others enjoying an event in which he himself takes no pleasure. Perhaps *schadenfreude* is a sign of arrogance, as if the rejoicer were imagining himself taking God’s side against his own enemies.” [Fox, Proverbs]

“God is disgusted with those who **gloat** over someone’s failure. Gloating over the disasters experienced by the poor is condemned in 17:5; in 24:17 gloating is not even permitted when an **enemy** has a problem. Gloating may cause God to side with one’s enemy and to withdraw **His wrath ... from** that enemy. God hates gloating because it suggests a superior attitude over others.” [Buzzell, Proverbs, BKC]

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FIVE: How does a follower of Jesus approach these?

1. As trials – like the other types in our lives (e.g. choices, relationships, \$, etc.)

Initial stress -> request for help -> patience while searching -> vetting solution -> praise, sharing, and 'travelogue'.
2. First Corinthians 13: "believe the best, but rejoice in truth" –
3. Innocent until proven guilty?
4. Judge not by appearances ... test all things ...

- **"Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment"** [Jesus, John 7:24]
- **"Test everything; hold fast what is good"** [Apostle Paul, 1 Thess 5:21]

5. Watch for deceptive spin – *a la Genesis 3* ... Spin: Restriction, not Protection.

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6. With a trusting heart, based on a mixture of personal experience and personal conviction
 - a. Has He built an audit trail / trend line with you? What is more reasonable to expect?

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for **I shall again praise him**, my salvation and my God. [Ps 42.11]
 - b. Anchor points:
 - The 'internal elements' of the Cross,
 - Where does morality ORIGINATE?
7. Understand that your experience has been and will be replicated by others—many times. (1 Corinthians 10:13 again)
8. Three outcomes:
 - a. Truth with peace of mind
 - b. Uncertainty (not resolved, but 'defused'—objection cannot be sustained) with peace of mind
 - c. "Repeat as needed" // "Repeat as forced" (lol)