



"The problem of reconciling human suffering with the existence of a God who loves, is only insoluble so long as we attach a trivial meaning to the word 'love.'"

—C.S. Lewis

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Christian Reaction to Terror

The United States of America suffered a savage blow yesterday, September 11, 2001, by an as-yet unknown terrorist group. Two very symbolic targets of American pride—its capitalist system and its vaunted military—crumbled under the explosive power of guided-missile airplanes full of jet fuel. Untold thousands may have lost their lives in these attacks. Certainly thousands have been injured, many severely.

So far, we have heard of no members of this church being among the injured or dead, and we can thank [God](#) for His [mercy](#) and protection. That gratitude over being spared, however, should not bring us a sense of spiritual well-being. Rather, it should spur us to engage in a thorough introspection regarding our [relationship with God](#) and our personal character because events of these proportions do not occur accidentally in terms of God's purpose.

Certainly, we should pray for those who are hurt, as well as the families of the dead and injured. The latter will have to deal with grief and vastly altered lives over not just weeks but years and decades and whole lifetimes. We should give what aid we can offer, whether in the form of blood, money, clothing or personal service. Such things should be done if we have opportunity ([Proverbs 3:27](#); [Matthew 25:34-40](#); [Galatians 6:10](#); [James 4:17](#)).

Let us not forget, too, to pray for the nation's leaders who are dealing most closely with both the cleanup and the response to this "act of war." The Bible specifically commands

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us to do this in [1 Timothy 2:1-3](#), and [Romans 13:1-7](#) implies our intercession before God for the authorities He appointed to govern the nations. Consider also that [Jesus Christ](#) admonishes us to "pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" ([Matthew 5:44-45](#)).

In [Luke 13:1-5](#), Jesus is asked about those who died in similar disasters in His own time. His response is instructive:

Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

He is saying that events of this nature should be a wake up call to repent to all who survive! What we should focus on is our own guilt, our personal failure to live up to God's standards. Those who died are just like us! They paid the price for their sin—death. Do we deserve any less? Only by the [grace](#) and mercy of God do we live and have the opportunity to seek [forgiveness](#), repent and grow in character.

America, as a part of modern Israel, needs to **WAKE UP** to its backsliding from God, to its iron forehead and its stiff-necked disregard for God, to its [pride](#) in itself and its institutions. Disasters like these are allowed by God—if not sent by God—to jolt us out of complacency and apathy to [repentance](#) and renewed devotion to God ([Amos 4:6—5:15](#)). Please read our booklet, [Prepare to Meet Your God!](#). If this does not happen within the average American, it still must happen within those whom God has called out to serve Him.

As the events unfolded throughout the day, Psalm 2 came prominently to mind: "Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?" The psalm is primarily concerned with the leaders of nations conniving against God and His anointed leaders, particularly Christ. However, it can be made to apply to this act of terror in that those behind these attacks plot against Manasseh, entirely ignoring the sovereignty and purpose of God in the affairs of men. He replies:

He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision. . . . 'You [the Son] shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is

kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

We Americans especially, who have lived like kings on the earth, need to take this warning seriously. Yes, embrace the Son, Jesus Christ, the soon-returning Bridegroom, before His anger begins to kindle against the continued defection from God, before the terror of the time of Jacob's trouble spreads throughout the land in intensified warnings of God's displeasure. Now is the time to strengthen and display our trust in Him. Who knows if another opportunity will pass our way again?

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[God's Sense of Justice](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

God's sense of justice comes into question in the minds of men when they read of His judgments in the Bible and see His acts in history. His judgments seem unfair because man can never please God on his own since God's standards are higher than he can achieve. Yet He has made it clear that even the smallest infraction of His law merits the death penalty. Everyone is guilty! God, then, is absolutely justified in what He decides regarding the judgment and punishment of us all (conversely, He always rewards righteousness). Moreover, we do not know all the circumstances and reasons for His judgments, so our opinions of God's decisions are at best ill-informed. Of all judges, only God is absolutely fair and incorruptible. And when He shows mercy it manifests His lovingkindness and grace.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Innocent Victims?](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

We often hear of "innocent victims" dying in some tragic way, but are they truly innocent? John Ritenbaugh discusses God's perspective of the sinful, human condition.

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