

How Prepared Are You?

Many Disasters and One Disaster
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Deuteronomy 28:28-29 The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save you.

Deuteronomy 28:34 So you shall be driven mad because of the sight which your eyes see.

I had an interesting sequence of events that led to this commentary. The overall subject of the August 2013 issue of *Whistleblower* magazine is the unreported health crisis of the Obama era. That unreported health crisis is the mental health of many citizens of this nation, which is a problem of growing concern because so many are stressed to the max.

The magazine reports that the stress of living in today's America is driving tens of millions to the point of illness, depression, and self-destruction. It is from that magazine that I read that suicide has surpassed car crashes as the leading cause of injury death for many Americans. More Americans committed suicide in 2012 than died in combat in Afghanistan. In addition to that, fully one third of the nation's employees suffer chronic, debilitating stress, and more than half of all Millennials—these are young adults, 18 to 33 years old, supposedly in the peak of their good health years—are experiencing stress that keeps them awake at night with depression and anxiety disorders.

But an article that really caught my attention was one that began by reporting on the background of a 38 year-old Chicago police officer's chronic depression, building from being overwhelmed by the constant pressures he regularly encountered on the job. He committed suicide because, to him, the problems are unsolvable. The murder rate is so high in Chicago that from August 7, 2001, when the war in Afghanistan began, 2,166 American forces were killed in Afghanistan. But in Chicago, between January 1, 2003, to the end of 2012, 4,797 were murdered. That's 2,631 more who died by violent death by murder in a year and a half less time in Chicago than were killed on the battlefield. That's more than double the war deaths.

Then I heard Ted Bowling's sermonette last Sabbath ["Stay In The Ship"] of the harrowing experience the apostle Paul and the group traveling with him had on their journey to Rome for the trial that ended in his execution.

Then Monday evening, Evelyn and I watched the movie titled *The Impossible*. The movie is made for an American audience, but it is a true account of a Spanish family and their experiences during the tsunami that devastated parts of Thailand on December 26, 2004. The family was enjoying a vacation, staying at a beachfront hotel or resort. That tsunami killed over 230,000 people. The tsunami struck mid-morning with no warning whatever, while the entire family of five—father, mother, three sons—were either enjoying the resort's swimming pool or reading at poolside. The director of the movie had to use a computer to generate a tsunami scene, which he also interspersed with computer-generated scenes of the mother and the oldest son being swept miles inland, mostly underwater.

They ran aground, miraculously close enough that together they found each other pretty quickly. The first thing they heard was crying, coming from beneath a pile of debris. The son dug the person out and rescued a very young tow-headed Swedish boy whose name was Daniel. There was an immediate language difficulty; he could not speak their language and they could not speak his. But they did find out his name was Daniel. He was about two.

The two younger sons, who appeared to be about five and three, clung to trees when the wave overwhelmed them and were rescued by other hotel guests and return to the resort, where they found the father, who was pretty much uninjured.

Only debris remained of the resort. The only clothing they had was beachwear. They had no shoes for negotiating mountains of smashed debris. The mother, who was a medical doctor, was badly injured in the chest and left leg, bleeding very greatly internally. She would not have survived, but for the dogged persistence of the eldest son, who was about 12, in keeping her going and seeing to her well-being. He managed to get a little boy Daniel and her up into a huge tree where they were safe from the snakes that were slithering around. They had no idea where they were.

Then began the father's ordeal of searching for his wife and son and not knowing whether either was alive or drowned and buried under mountains of debris, while also trying to see to the well-being of the two sons that he had with him now.

Chaos was almost total. Communication was virtually nil. There was no electricity. Transportation was almost non-existent. Medical help was extremely scarce. The mother and son were found by Thai villagers and taken to an emergency medical center. That was a very painful ordeal for the mother because all they could do was drag her through the slop. And then someone found a door, and they used that to make a makeshift stretcher.

The Emergency Medical Center was filled with what seemed like thousands of milling, moaning, dazed people needing assistance. Triage had already been instituted, and they decided that they could save the mother somehow. But through a name mix up, the boy and the 12 year-old were separated. Neither knew where the other was.

While all this was going on, the father was running all over the countryside, barefooted, looking for them. He enlisted the help of fellow survivors at the resort to watch after the two younger boys and then, through no fault of their own, the boys were taken from them by Thai authorities attempting to do their job. Now the entire family was separated.

It is difficult to tell in the movie how much time elapsed, but the entire family was united, much because of the unflagging determination of the father and the elder son, each doing independently of each other—they had not met one another—what they could do to pull things together.

One of the first things that came to my mind in thinking about this movie and the suddenness with which the family's well-being changed—in a matter of seconds—was Ecclesiastes 3 and the seven pairs of opposites, each pair having a good and a bad side. Most sobering of all in that chapter is that God makes sure that we know *He* causes these things.

The family in the movie had no warning, but the movie showed them actually fairly well-prepared, with a strong family structure. They loved each other and they did not fly apart. The movie did not portray any of the family being wilful, demanding complainers, and they struck me as being well-

disciplined. Despite all the chaos around them, when the mother and son were reunited, she ordered him to go through that chaos to see whether he might be of assistance to anybody.

Well, brethren, it is preparation time. How prepared are we physically, mentally, and most importantly, spiritually for the disasters that are building around this nation? As the news shows that the stresses of Deuteronomy 28 that God also sends, they are now coming upon us and they are growing. The cracks in our national character are showing pretty badly.

It is time to get ourselves ready, and I would say the first thing to do spiritually would be to get our families in order—godly order.