

Are You A Victim?

Our Response to Victimization

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An event occurred in early June that touches a major issue under which we live our lives. Actually, this issue is something that we need to be very well aware of if indeed we believe that God is sovereign, that God provides for us, and that God is omniscient. In other words, that God sees all that is going on. He governs His creation, and He provides for His people.

Now, this particular event that I am talking about occurred on a golf course during one of the big golf tournaments that men are a part of. And there was a golfer in strong contention to win, and he was accused of improving his lie. Now, what this meant was that he put his ball into a position where it would be easier for him to hit the next shot. Well, the man did not actually move his ball. What he did, apparently inadvertently—it was not something that he did consciously—the ball was sitting in deep grass and he took his club, and he just moved a couple pieces of grass away from the ball, not thinking that in a tournament of that caliber, that would be illegal.

What made it more interesting was that the marshal, who was observing that particular group of golfers (a marshal is like a policeman, and if he sees you doing anything wrong, he has the authority to penalize you) did not catch what this golfer did. And so, the golfer hit the ball, played out that hole, and went on.

Now what happened afterward was interesting, because a viewer watching the tournament on television saw what the golfer did. They called up the golf officials at that tournament where the tournament was being held and reported what the golfer did. They then looked at television tapes, and they penalized the man two strokes.

That may not sound like very much to you, but as I said a little bit earlier, this man was in strong contention to win. Those two strokes caused him to finish lower than he would have, and it cost him \$150,000.

I can give you a case that is even more interesting than that in terms of money. Those of you who may follow the National Football League might know that the Carolina Panthers had a young man on their team named Julius Peppers, a very highly rated well-paid player. Julius, about halfway through the season, maybe it was a little over halfway through the season, had a random drug test on him by the National Football League officials which caused him to be suspended for four games.

Now what happened was that he drank an over-the-counter sports drink that you can buy at any health food store. And to make matters even more interesting, the trainer on the football team actually recommended that he drink this stuff. Neither one of them was aware that there was a steroid in that called ephedra. And that is an illegal substance [in the NFL]. So he did not know. Neither did the trainer. And, when you do not play the game, under those circumstances in the National Football League, they do not pay you. This young fellow is very highly paid. That fine of just missing those games cost him over 1 million dollars, just because he innocently drank some ephedra.

What I am driving at is that both of these men appear to have been innocent victims. When I say innocent, that is qualified because they both *did* do something wrong, but neither apparently had the *intent* to do what was wrong. They got caught in doing what was wrong, and both of them suffered very large penalties for what they did.

How do we react to something like this? Because every one of us is subject to something of this nature, because life is not fair. Things of this nature do not seem to play any favorites. It does not seemingly care whether you are righteous or unrighteous. You can become a victim of somebody else's sin, or a victim of your own ignorance, never intending to sin. You become a victim.

How does God fit into this? That is important because you and I can be victimized.

Is God unfair? If He is sovereign, and He is provident, and He is looking over us in a way that no human parent can, would we ever accuse God of

being unfair? Probably not. But it can show up in our attitude. It can show up in the way we deal with things, and the way we react to a situation which we can easily judge as being unfair. “I don’t deserve this. This shouldn’t happen to me.”

In Exodus 14, beginning in verse 10, it says,

Exodus 14:10-12 And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD. Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

Here they were, not even a week out of their slavery, and they already feel like victims. They had been taken advantage of. They forgot all the good that God had done for them in releasing them from their slavery. Mighty miracles they saw for who knows how long of a period of time. And there was Moses claiming that God did this, or God did that. And when they left Egypt, they did it with a high hand. They were jumping for joy. Six days later, they are griping and accusing and sarcastic, “Were there no graves in Egypt?” You think that is not sarcasm? Yes, it is.

Now, there is another case that can begin to instruct us in the reaction to seemingly unfair victimization when we fall victim to somebody else's sin, or maybe even somebody close to us does. I will not go through the whole thing, but in Leviticus 10 Nadab and Abihu were struck dead by God, because of what they failed to do—they did not carry out their responsibilities the way that they should have.

Yes, they were victims, but they were dead. They could feel nothing. They could not react. But Aaron had the opportunity to react, and he could very easily feel, “I’ve been victimized here. Two of my sons are dead now. Don’t

you think, God, that was a little bit heavy handed to take them away in the blink of an eye?" In verse 6 though, Moses said to Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar his sons,

Leviticus 10:6-7 And Moses said to Aaron, and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, "Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the people. But let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the LORD has kindled. You shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die, for the anointing oil of the LORD is upon you." And they did according to the word of Moses.

Now it is important that you see and understand that the anointing oil is upon you too. It is the Holy Spirit. In Aaron's case, it was real oil that was poured on him. But Moses' instruction to them was, "Don't you dare show any negative reaction to this. I don't want to see you crying." Apparently, there was something they did to their hair whenever something like this occurred. He said, "Do not do that. You've just go on with life as though nothing happened." They were not to show any sign of disagreement with what God did.

This is also very important to our well-being, because if problems, even if we are victimized, are faced in the right attitude, the chances of overcoming the problem are incredibly increased. If we are down in our cups, and sarcastic, and accusative, showing disagreement with God with what either God has designed or God has permitted to occur in our life, do you think we are going to get any help from God to overcome that? Not until our attitude changes, because, you see, what we are doing is accusing Him. He is omniscient. He knows everything that is going on in your life, and nothing happens unless He either makes it happen, or permits it to happen. And if He permits it, it is therefore given His approval that it occur, and we are calling Him into account if we disagree. That is what was facing Aaron.

Job had a very good approach to this. As you know, he had some things come upon him. And even God said he was an upright man. In other words, Job's sins were not the cause of what came upon him. Here in Job 2, verse 9 he says,

Job 2:9-10 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Job did not get everything right throughout the course of this trial that he had, but he nonetheless kept himself within the bounds of what was acceptable to God. And it is a good approach for us to have. Both good and bad are going to come from the hand of God. We may as well be aware of that and accept it. The way of God is going to be difficult, because we are going to be faced with trials that He wants us to go through, and one of these trials is that He wants to see how we are going to take it when something unfair happens to us.

One final scripture; David is an outstanding example of someone in this case.

II Samuel 16:5-10 Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came. And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: "Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue! The LORD has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!" Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!" But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David.' Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?'"

David saw through the immediate problem to the hand of the sovereign God. And he said, "Let it be." David understood that if justice were really given to David, he is a dead man. Because Shimei said it right. "You are a man with bloody hands." David was a warrior. He took the lives of many people.

Now God can forgive. But David understood that if God permitted it then who was he to call God into account? There was something that was being worked out here that may have been beyond David's comprehension at the time. So, he would just deal with it in a good attitude.

Like David, we have to look beyond the immediate circumstances to far greater causes. And that is, the things beyond the immediate are being worked out, and it may not become apparent for quite a long time before those things that are being worked out are revealed.

So we have to be patient even with God. And we have to know and experience that His judgments are always right. It is not enough just to know that they are right intellectually. God wants to make sure that we understand by experience that His judgments are right. And the only way that we can do that sometimes in a case like this is where we experience victimization, and God permits it.

We may not see all that is working right away. But if we take the right approach, we are going to see that in the end, it is going to both glorify God, and it is going to play a role in creating us into the image of Jesus Christ.