

Many events and circumstances in our lives shape who we are as people. As believers, sometimes it is hard to face difficult circumstances with the assurance that God is working in it for our good. "What good could possibly come out of this?" we say. When it seems that the worst possible event has happened, the truth of God's work in all our circumstances is hard to see.

Sometimes I wonder what Joseph thought as his eleven brothers beat him and threw him in a pit. (Gen. 37:18-28). Did God intend that to happen? How could God allow Joseph to be sold into slavery and go to Egypt? Most modern readers would be saying, "How could you do this to me?"

Yet, we know that God was working for the good of Joseph and all the people of Egypt. Joseph would eventually be put in charge of all the grain in Egypt and he would save many people from famine (Gen. 50:20). If Joseph wouldn't have been sold as a slave, many Egyptians (as well as Joseph's family) would have died from the famine. If Joseph had all that information before being thrown into the pit, do you think he would have consented? Would you or I?

There are no events that are without meaning. Everything that happens in a believer's life, both good and bad, are the culmination of the purpose and plan of God, which is aimed at our good. They are to make us like Christ.

As Jesus' death by crucifixion is taking place in Luke 23:44-49. As the fulfillment of God's purpose was happening, three events took place which forever marked God's interaction with mankind. Like all the events and circumstances in our lives, these three occurrences have deep meaning, both for mankind in general, and you and I personally.

The first event was a darkness that fell over the land for about three hours. Luke 23:44 says, "It was now about the sixth hour, and a darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour." Jesus had not died yet, but was very close. At this very moment, the Son of God became sin for sinners and the judgment of the Holy Father fell down upon Him. I can't imagine how it must have felt for Jesus, who never committed sin, to suddenly receive upon Himself the judgment for the world's sins.

Matthew 27:51 also tells us that the earth shook as this darkness fell. God's judgment upon sin had come. The force of the holy wrath of a perfect God descended upon the earth and came to bear on the only man who ever lived without sin. This darkness was not simply an eclipse because the Jews used a Lunar calendar and Passover always fell on the full moon. During times of a full moon, the moon's position makes a solar eclipse impossible. This was a supernatural occurrence of God's wrath against sin.

This event shows us the horrible truth about sin. Sin is not simply "making mistakes." Sin is not minor failures that our God simply shrugs off and disregards. The Holy God is perfect and a perfect judge must condemn wrongdoing perfectly.

Any infraction that is not met with justice challenges the perfection of God. The supernatural darkness provides a concrete example that Jesus indeed suffered the wrath of the Father in our place and it confirms that there will indeed be a day of judgment for those who are still in their sins.

The second event that occurred is the tearing of the veil (v. 45). The Temple veil (or curtain) was the most magnificent of the thirteen curtains used in the Temple. This veil (which was as thick as a man's hand) was used to block the way to the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies was where God's presence dwelt (Ex. 25:22). No one entered this place except for the High Priest, once a year to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat for the sins of the people (Heb. 9:7). At no other time could man approach the presence of God and live.

God's holiness demanded that sinful men must bring sacrifice in order to enter into His presence. Something must die for sin to be atoned. This continued year after year. Yet, when Christ willingly offered Himself as a sacrifice, the veil, which separated man from God's presence, was torn from top to bottom. The way to God had been forever opened by the one sacrifice of Christ.

This supernatural event means that now man can come to God freely by the blood of Christ, without Temple, priest, or animal sacrifice, and enjoy intimate fellowship with a Holy God because of His Son's intercession. Hebrews 10:19-22 says,

“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

The third supernatural event is the most amazing of all. This event boggles the mind and is utterly incomprehensible. As Christ was dying on the cross, continually straining for every breath, speaking words of forgiveness and quoting Old Testament Messianic Psalms, God worked in a wicked man's heart and brought Him to the light of truth.

As Jesus took His last breath, the Spirit of God moved in the heart of one of the very men who had crucified Him. A Centurion at the foot of the cross - no doubt it was he who led the walk to Golgotha, summoned Simon to carry Jesus' cross, and had an active hand in the mistreatment of Christ - confessed Jesus as a righteous man. Indeed, Matthew 27 and Mark 15 also tell us that this centurion confessed that Jesus was the Son of God!

The darkness and earthquake showed us God's wrath against sin which was placed on Christ. The Temple veil being torn showed us that the way to a Holy God is now open to man. But most importantly, the salvation and confession of this centurion,

by the movement of God's grace in his heart, shows us that there is absolutely no one who is beyond the love and salvation of our God. If there ever was a man who might claim that he had sinned too much for grace, it was he. He had probably mocked, humiliated, beaten, and disparaged Christ in a multitude of ways over the past two days – leading all the way to the cross. However, at the death of Jesus, God still moved in conviction upon his heart and drew him to repentance and faith.

If he was not too far gone, then no one on earth is beyond the grace of God.