



I Surrender...Some

I love epic stories. Like the story of a shepherd boy who takes down a giant with a sling shot. Or of a slave turned prince who raises his staff and parts the sea. Or of a housewife who drives a tent peg through the head of a ruthless army commander while he sleeps. The heroes and heroines of the Bible thrill and inspire me.

Mostly. The one hitch is that for every victorious biblical hero there are plenty of others who meet with bitter tragedy. David kills a giant, Paul rots in jail. John lives to a ripe old age, Peter gets crucified upside down. Daniel survives the lion's den, while Christians in Rome get ripped apart by the same beasts.

What gives? Wouldn't it be much simpler if God operated on a ledger system? Do good, get good stuff. Do bad, get bad stuff. Be a hero, live long and prosper. Makes sense to me, but throwing your hat in with God doesn't always pan out that way. Take, for example, the story of Job.

Job was an amazing guy. Even God thought so. "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright...." (Job 1:8). Yet Job suffered terrible calamities. His friends assumed the suffering came about because Job or one of his kids had some secret sin.

But in reality Job was just a good guy who got bad stuff, and he was as confused by the faulty ledger system as his friends. Eventually he gets so frustrated that he plans to take God to court to hear his case (Job 13). Maybe he wanted God on the witness stand to answer once and for all why bad things happen to good people. Maybe he just wanted to sue him for negligence.

However, when God finally speaks to Job, he doesn't answer any questions. He doesn't tell Job all about Satan's little plan or go into how Job's reward will be bigger in heaven while the real bad guys will rot in hell. *Don't worry little Job—all will even out in the end.*

Instead he makes one thing quite clear; asking God, "Why me?" when disaster strikes

is not likely to get a gentle answer. In fact, it may get you the same answer as Job got: "Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? Brace yourself, because I have some questions for you" (Job 38:2-3, NLT). God then launches into a brief history of the universe, wondering where Job was when he laid the foundations of the earth, stretched out the galaxies and created the crocodiles.

God tells Job essentially this, "You're not the center of the universe. I am." Which means there is no ledger system. Which means God allows John to live to a hundred while Peter is martyred. And what is it to Peter? Jesus says simply, "...you follow me" (John 21:22, NLT).

Yet even with those clear instructions from our Lord we still ask, "Why me?" way more often than we ask, "God, am I following you?" John Eldredge writes, "We are far more upset when things go wrong than we ever are when we aren't close to God.... Don't you hear people say, 'Why did God let this happen?' far more than you hear them say, 'Why aren't I more fully given over to God?'" (*Walking with God*, pp. 86-87).

I admit, I don't ask that second question very often. But I had to ask it the other day when our worship leader launched into "I Surrender All," and I just couldn't sing it. There was a lump in my throat, choking down the words. I wanted to sing it. I truly, honestly believed I should sing it. But it felt like a lie. I can surrender some, but surrendering all means fully accepting that God is the center of the universe and that my one and only job is to follow him. For better or for worse.

My growing place is to catch myself the next time I find myself mad at God because something didn't go my way. And before the words, "Why me?" cross my mind or pass my lips, I want to sing my full surrender and ask instead, "Why, Lord? Why am I not fully given over to you?" Because that is a heroic question, and one that I'm sure God will help me answer. □

—Susan Reedy

Do good, get good stuff.
Do bad, get bad stuff.
Makes sense to me, but throwing your hat in with God doesn't always pan out that way.