

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Time and Chance

(Jerry Fite)

How should a believer react to the shocking and tragic news of a neighbor being shot in the back of the head by an apparent stranger while he is filling his gas tank at a local convenient station? Then, another tragic event happens soon after when a husband places a gun to the head of his wife, telling all that he is going to kill her, and then suddenly turns the gun on himself, allowing the shocked wife to go free.

Is time and chance a common factor for both? If so, is God really in control of the specific events in our life? Is the final word “God” or is it “chance”? Can it be “both”?

While reflecting on life under the sun, the inspired preacher writes, *“I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise, nor wealth to the discerning, nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all”* (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

In life, we suddenly experience circumstances which the wisest could not have foreseen as occurring at the time, and even

the strongest cannot overcome. The swiftest runner does not win all races, and the strongest warriors do not win all battles. Regardless of how diligently we apply our strengths in life, *“time and chance overcome them all”*. At our best, we can find ourselves in the wrong place at the wrong time, being overcome with the consequences. *“Moreover, man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net, and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them”* (Ecclesiastes 9:12).

Such is true regarding life under the sun. But as we look beyond the sun, how does our faith in a sovereign God, who is still at work in this world’s affairs, harmonize with the reality we are experiencing on earth: One man is shot to death at a time when he was not sensing danger; and a woman, expecting death at any moment, is suddenly spared.

God is in charge, and changes the times and seasons. *“And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes Kings...”* (Daniel 2:21). We see the political world around us in disarray, but faith makes sense of it by

knowing the changes are occurring under the overriding power of a sovereign God.

God is in charge of whether we live or die. James writes, *“...you ought to say, ‘if the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that’* (James 4:15). When a man, who knows not his time of death, suddenly falls under death’s crushing weight, faith knows God “willed” it in the sense that he “allowed” it to occur. One can still bless God’s name in worship as he confesses that God gives and God takes away (Job 2:21). Like Job, we might ever know the secret things that are occurring before God regarding us personally, but we know that all roads lead unto Him and His glory (Romans 11:36). We live accordingly by faith.

We know God is in control of the big picture of life and eternity. But we also know that God allows “time and chance” to enter our lives. In such times we must get over our frustration of not controlling all things, and trust in the God who is in control of all things. Anchored in trust, we can sorrow, reflect, and determine to glorify the God above as we experience unexpected time and chance below.