

Good Fortune Is No Sign of God's Favor

Luke 13:1-5

Have you ever seen a person survive a train wreck, or an airplane crash, or a fire in a building – a tragedy where others died, but that person escapes – and hear the survivor say, “God was watching out for me,” as if the other people who died didn’t have God watching out for them? People *assume* that when they are the recipients of good fortune, they are receivers of God’s favor. Not so, says Jesus in our text today. Luke records for us that Jesus heard about a tragedy among His own people, the Galileans, and then Jesus refers to another tragedy of a tower falling in Siloam. Two tragedies that teach us a lesson about life.

1. The Galileans whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices - This piece of history is not recorded in the Bible or extant secular literature. Adam Clarke in his commentary states that the Galileans were the most seditious people in the land: they belonged properly to Herod Antipas’ jurisdiction; but, as they kept the great feasts at Jerusalem, they probably, by their seditious behavior, gave Pilate, who was a mortal enemy to Herod, a pretext to fall upon and slay many of them, mingling their blood with the sacrifices.

2. The tower in Siloam that fell and killed eighteen people – The Tower of Siloam was an ancient tower in Siloam in south Jerusalem. It is speculated that the Tower may have been part of a Roman aqueduct connected to the Pool of Siloam, or possibly a defense tower on the wall of Jerusalem that collapsed. The death of these eighteen and the death of the Galileans was the “talk of the town” – like our Twin Towers.

I. Jesus uses these two tragedies to give a two-fold caution (vs. 1-4).

“Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners ... because they suffered this fate?” (v. 2)

A. People do not suffer in direct proportion to their sin.

If a person suffers, or is afflicted, or experiences a tragedy, it isn’t always a sign of God’s disfavor. The Bible makes this point very clearly. It shows that the wicked sometimes prosper and the righteous sometimes suffer deeply. The book of Job especially belies the idea of a proportionate relationship between sin and suffering by showing that even though Job was the most upright man in the world, he was visited with untold misery, and then had to endure the questioning of his “friends,” who assumed he must have fallen into terrible sin. This isn’t the way it happens. *“Why do the wicked prosper? Why do the faithless seem to live at ease” (Jeremiah 12:1).*

B. People do not flourish in direct proportion to their faithfulness.

We have seen that “God will provide for our every need” when we follow Him and His Kingdom. The difficulty is that in our little minds we think what we want is what we need, but in the big plan of God, what He gives is precisely what we need. So, when we are faithful to God and we receive rejection, slander and abuse; or are in “dire straits” (suffering loss), it is what we need. One’s invisible, vertical relationship cannot be measured by visible, outward circumstances in life.

II. Jesus uses these two tragedies to give wise counsel (v. 5).

“Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (v. 5). “But the wicked will perish” (Psalm 37:20).

The second death (Rev. 20:14) is where the wicked perish after God’s punitive judgment for sin. God owes nobody freedom from tragedies. He does not owe us protection from any falling towers. Our only hope to avoid death is our repentance. Jesus was correcting His disciples’ way of thinking. Every time you see a tragedy that occurs, you should view it as a parable of an unshakeable truth. Behind every tragedy stands an eternal truth. *“Except you repent, you will likewise perish (v. 5).*

A. Never view your comfort in this life as a sign of God’s favor; nor tragedy as a sign of disfavor.

B. Only the person who embraces Christ and repents of sin is the person in God’s favor (Ps. 2:12).